








ILLUSTRATIONS OF GENIUS,  
IN SOME OF ITS RELATIONS TO  
CULTURE AND SOCIETY.

BY  
HENRY GILES,  
AUTHOR OF "LECTURES AND ESSAYS."

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# ILLUSTRATIONS OF GENIUS.

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## CERVANTES.

SHAKSPEARE and CERVANTES lived in the same age ; they belonged to the same order of mind ; and that is, the order of sovereign genius. It is rather extraordinary that no well-authenticated portrait exists of either : but Cervantes did what Shakspeare neglected to do — he left a very distinct sketch of his person, which was probably intended to accompany some engraving to be used as a frontispiece to one of his publications. “ Him whom you see here,” he says, “ with an aquiline visage, chestnut hair, his forehead high and open, with lively, animated eyes, his nose curved, though well proportioned — a silver beard, though not twenty years ago it was golden — large mustachios, a small mouth, but few teeth, and those so bad and ill assorted that they don’t care to preserve harmony with each other — a body neither fat nor lean, neither tall nor short — a clear complexion, rather light than brown — a little stooping in the shoulders, and not very quick of foot, — that is the author of *Galatea*, of *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, and other works which



run through the streets as if they had lost their way, and perhaps without the name of their master."

Michael Cervantes, thus delineated by himself, was descended from a noble but reduced family of Castile. He was born in Alcala de Henares in October, 1547. He received the ordinary education which gentlemen of his country and his times received. He studied for a while in the University of Salamanca, where it does not appear that he gained any distinction or waited for any degree. He went to Rome, in 1570, in the retinue of Cardinal Aguaviva. He did not remain there; and in a short time after he enlisted in the Spanish division of the army under Don John of Austria, sent to the aid of Venice against the power of the Turks. He was distinguished and wounded in the great battle of Lepanto. This form of expression we use in casting our minds back into the relations of things as they were *then* in appearance; but from *our* point of view those relations are reversed. We would say that the battle of Lepanto has now its chief distinction by the fact that Cervantes had a share in it, humble and subordinate as the share was. Who would not rather, now, have been the maimed private, Cervantes, than the proud captain, John of Austria? Who makes a hero now of the victor of Lepanto beside the author of Don Quixote? For my own part, I care as little about John of Austria as I do about "John o' Groat." The mere word, "Lepanto," has never failed to move me with impassioned impulse; for, since I first read the story of Don Quixote, Lepanto comes always to my mind associated with the heroic memory and the immortal name of delight-giving Cervantes.

On his way to Spain Cervantes was captured by corsairs and sold to slavery in Algiers. Miseries and cruelties he bore during his protracted bondage which only eloquence like his own could describe. His sufferings did not break his spirit. His bold plans for escape, the invention displayed in their contrivance, and the courage manifested in the attempts to execute them moved his tyrants to respect, even to fear, him; and one of them declared that, while the lame Spaniard was loose, his dominions or himself were not secure. The family of Cervantes mortgaged their property; but such was the importance in which the barbarians held their prisoner that the proceeds would not be accepted for his ransom. With the amount he released his brothers and staid behind himself, again to conspire and again to plot. His father in the mean time died, and his last moments were imbittered with the thought that his son was still in chains. There is something, I fancy, of an implied, an underlying, pathos even in the mad compassion of Don Quixote for the galley slaves, in which we may read impressions of the author's own sad experience in Algiers. There was a danger of its being perpetual. His sisters and widowed mother could raise only a hundred ducats. The cold and gloomy Philip II. was inaccessible or immovable. When, at last, a petition reached him, all that could be extorted from the despot for a Christian Spaniard, a hero of Lepanto in the fangs of a pirate, was permission to export merchandise not prohibited to the value of ten thousand ducats, on which the profit amounted to about sixty dollars. At last, by the combined exertion of his family and the Fath-

ers of Mercy, Cervantes was liberated, just as he was on board a vessel which was under sail for Constantinople to transport him to everlasting thralldom.

Cervantes, in his thirty-seventh year, married a lady of some small fortune and of an honorable family. He held occasionally inconsiderable employments under the government, which brought him more trouble than wages, and more persecution than thanks. His main support seems to have been derived from the remuneration which he received for executing commissions and agencies for private individuals. In such condition we find him in Seville in the year 1598. Cervantes was now fifty-one years old, wise, indigent, and ill treated — nay, not in the worst sense indigent; for, if he had want, he had honor; and though neglect might wound his peace, it could not repress his genius. For a few years he is now lost to the research of critics and biographers. Some traditions say that he was in prison, and that in prison he wrote the first part of *Don Quixote*. However that may be, the reappearance of Cervantes in literary history and the publication of this first part are nearly-joined events. But between the publication of the first part and the second many years intervened. The publication of the second part was hastened by a circumstance of flagitious indignity. A literary miscreant, taking the assumed name of Avellenada, not content with presumptuously attempting to preoccupy the public with a spurious second part of *Don Quixote*, rabidly attacked the first part and scurrilously insulted the author. The genuine second part was immediately given to the world, and therein, alluding to his injurer and traducer

with the dignity of true greatness, he dismisses him in a few quiet words that have in them more of banter than of anger. It is even said that Cervantes *knew* the author, and, with a magnanimity which was native to him, concealed the name of his cowardly foe. Yet such concealment was perhaps the surest revenge; for, though exposure must have drawn on the felon the scorn of nations, he was no doubt one of those ingrained rascals whose blood had not heat enough for shame, whose forehead was too brazen for a blush, and to whom the honor of a scourging from Cervantes would have been immortality and renown. Genius should always be above provocation from the base; but if, through infirmity, it descends to be angry, it should bury its weakness in oblivion. It is a double error for a great soul, in the first instance, to be irritated by a mean one; and, in the second, to exalt it to the hope of lasting notoriety by giving it any connection with a living and enduring reputation. The painter who put his enemy's likeness into his picture under the character of Judas may have done what his enemy most desired; and, to have a place in a picture which was likely to give him continued distinction, he would possibly have been willing to be in it even under the character of the devil.

Don Quixote, complete in the publication of the second part, more than fulfilled its opening promise. It was stamped by Christendom with that mark of universal approbation which is a passport to all ages. "It was ushered into the world," says "the duchess" in the story, "with the general applause of nations;" and, after centuries, that applause has nothing lost.



It is not frequent in literary history that popularity so sudden is followed by fame so permanent. Don Quixote has borne without hurt the ordeal of time; and the enthusiasm which in the beginning was delighted surprise has long settled into confirmed admiration. But Cervantes was now fast nearing that country where earthly honor, past or posthumous, ceases to be of value. He recognized this with a devout and a cheerful mind. The shadows of the tomb cast no darkness on his spirit or his brow; his spirit was serene and his brow was clear. As he entered the solemn precincts of the grave he did so with no indecent levity, but with a fine and affecting humor—the humor of a noble and tender humanity, that out of suffering still beams smiles, and that, to the last, will cheer rather than complain. Though not free in youth and soldiership from sins incident to the temptations of his age and his profession, Cervantes led, on the whole, a worthy life. On the 18th of April, 1616, he received extreme unction; and on the 23d of April, being in his sixty-ninth year, he died. If England and Spain had then counted time by the same calendar, this day would have been marked by the deaths of Shakspeare and Cervantes; but, as the calendar used in Spain differed from that of England eleven days in advance, the death of Cervantes was by that interval earlier than the death of Shakspeare. Cervantes died in Madrid, and was buried in an unnoted spot of the cemetery belonging to the convent of the “Trinitarians.” Many cities at one time claimed the honor of his nativity; but the city in which he died left his body to obscurity; and

he who prepared entrancement for the heart, which cannot fail until man shall cease to laugh or weep, has no tomb to mark the spot where the mortal part of him reposes. But what boots it? Why should we much regret if the sepulchral clay of such men has neither monument nor epitaph, while their spirits go abroad over earth and find everlasting welcome in living souls? The secrecy that sometimes curtains the bed where a great one reposes guards it by mystery from vulgar idolatry; and when, like the Jews seeking for the grave of Moses, we cannot find the silent resting-place, the memory, which we would have associated with a name engraven upon stone, comes more directly to our spirits and more sublimely. Disconnected in our thoughts from local and limited mortality, we converse with its abiding life in a free and unbounded relationship. Still, in consecrating, with solemn designation, the space where the wrecked temples lie that once had shrined "celestial fire," we pay but a decent homage: we owe this homage to the deathless; and, in doing justice to them, we do honor to ourselves.

We now pass from the biographical aspect of our subject to the critical; and as of the one we have had but glances, of the other we can have no more.

We must concede to our author, in beginning, those general qualities which place him in the grandest order of creative and imaginative genius — which place him in the class with Homer, Shakspeare, Scott. Among other great endowments, we must allow him extraordinary capacities of invention; and, connected with these, we must also allow him fidelity to truth and nature, the results of penetrating insight and of

exact observation. As most evident of all and most essential, we must allow him that constructive faculty which gathers diversities of intellection and emotion into wholeness with that passion which gives it power and with that idealism which gives it elevation. And let me dwell here on that wonderful peculiarity of mind which enables a man to interpret actual character with a faculty akin to inspiration; which enables him to separate in all modifications of character the constituents which are inherent from those that are accidental, the constituents which are generic from those that are special, and the constituents which are special from those that are individual. To this let us add the still more wonderful peculiarity, — without which, indeed, a man may be a man of genius, but not of creative genius, — the peculiarity that enables a man to combine these constituents into such forms as it shall please him, and which, though ideal in origin and existence, as the forms will be, enables him to keep them always true to the laws of unity and fitness, to make them types of unchangeable and indestructible realities. Genius alone can thus interpret, thus create; because it is only genius that can think and work securely beyond the range of the individual sphere of habit. It requires no extraordinary ability to express intense personal feeling strongly or to move those whose feelings are coincident with one's own. It is not remarkable that one should understand the feelings of such persons as sympathize with him, and that with any moderate power of conception and any fair capacity of expression he should reproduce their sentiments and win upon their confidence. The effects produced on



those who live and move in the same sphere of belief, of politics, of taste, or of prejudice, with the agent who produces them, are no safe measures of general power, and are no test in any way of *genius*. A man's sect, a man's party, a man's circle in society are but enlargements of himself; and his influence within any of these limits is only an evidence of the force with which he imbodyes, and of the sagacity with which he applies, the common experience. But to go out of the common experience, to pass away from the individuality, and to conceive of life that was never *personally* or *sympathetically* known, — that had never any practically *felt* connection with the interests of the being who imagines or who paints it, never any part in his individual fear or hope, his individual gladness or grief, — to do this, not hesitantly, but confidently, not with a guess or a conjecture, but with certainty, with a certainty which has no fear to confront the severest criticism of actual knowledge, — to do this requires genius, genius of the highest kind, the genius of a Shakspeare or the genius of a Cervantes. Genius can for the time transmigrate its personality. It can transfuse this personality into any objective condition, and, though holding its own freedom, it can fully apprehend that condition, appropriate it, realize it, and present its phenomena distinctively and truly. Thus the great dramatic performer does not mimic or counterfeit; he *feels* his part as the poet feels his subject. He does not give a feigned expression of the grief or guilt which he presents; he gives it a genuine, true expression — not indeed as an actual, but as an imaginative, agent. Artistically, he is for the hour the character

which he *seems*. Thus, also, the great advocate is not the hireling which some suppose, who has emotions for a bribe and passions for payment. He pleads for his client with no false or simulated zeal. He speaks out of a real, and not a spurious, energy; and it is so far as he does thus speak that he speaks with effect. What if he suspects his client's guilt; what if he knows it; he knows also his love for liberty, his love for life; by the force of genius he takes the client's place, he conceives the client's risk, and, true to the situation, true to the instinct, his faculties and his eloquence obey the promptings of the situation and the instinct. He feels the danger thoroughly that is *not* his own; he speaks out of the feeling as earnestly as if it *were* his own; and he is as zealous in exploring all the methods of escape. The truth with which he realizes the personality of another, and at the same time brings his own free energy to act through the conception of that personality, is what constitutes his power; and such power is the power of genius. Shakspeare was in social grade of the commonalty; but he needed no *actual* experience to understand the personalities of kings. He knew what was in them. His genius divined their thoughts, and was accurate and quick to furnish these thoughts with becoming words. Cervantes in social grade was of the nobles; but he was no stranger to the feelings of a muleteer; and he could tell with discerning sympathy the hidden story of a goatherd's breast.

The humor of Cervantes, both in its kind and measure, entitles him to be ranked in the same class with Shakspeare. Ironical or literal, delicate or broad, of

smiling insinuation or grinning drollery, no species of humor is wanting or defective in the genius of Cervantes. He is master of the ludicrous in all its varieties ; but, as the case is with large souls, his humor is cordial — always from love and joy, always generous and friendly. Cervantes, as I have said, has humor in all its varieties ; universal humor, which belongs to essential relations and which is akin to wit ; national humor, which connects itself with the history, customs, idioms, habits of thought and habits of life native to the country where it springs ; individual humor, that which comes out from a singular cast of imagination, a special training, an intense appropriation of a man's own experience : these all, with their wondrous diversities of forms, with their capricious eccentricities of spirit, may be found in the writings of Cervantes. It is as cosmopolitan as humor can be, and yet it is distinctly national. It may well be doubted whether any writer was ever in the best sense more national than Cervantes ; whether any writer ever wound himself more lovingly into the instincts and idioms of his countrymen ; whether any writer can be more extensively known than Cervantes is in his native land ; and whether, being known, any was ever better appreciated. I can think of only one ; and that is Robert Burns. Both have access to the people by their humor, and by a humor powerfully national. But, with all its nationality, the humor of Cervantes is unmistakably individual. He created a spirit and a form of humor of which the whole is not only his own, but much of it *himself*. Were I called on, however, to specify what I consider the most individual, the most distinc-

tive, peculiarity in the humor of Cervantes, I would say, *its sweetness*. Among all the quizzical contortions to which he subjects the genus of the ludicrous there is not one leer of scorn, not one wrinkle of derision, no sneer of sarcasm, and no air of taunt. The chalice of humor which he fills with his bountiful imagination does truly overflow; it sparkles, it foams, it exhilarates; but, drink as deeply as one may, it does not imbitter, it does not inflame; it is a spirit beverage, healthful and refreshing, the oil of social gladness, and the milk of human kindness.

But here have I been speculating and philosophizing upon humor, as if such a method with such a subject could be ever to the purpose. Who can define humor? Who can dissect it by analysis or square it to the rules of logic? Who can methodize the vagaries of the mirthful brain? Who can make mathematics out of merriment? Who can postulate a pun? Who can square the circle of a joke? The calculus of cachination would be a pleasant kind of ciphering. One sometimes hears of the philosophy of humor. The phrase is, itself, most humorous. The philosophy of humor would truly be the humor of philosophy. Ratiocination is too hard and dry a process to have any association with a thing so glowing and so mellow as humor, which is, as Corporal Trim would say, the radical heat and moisture of the human mind. We have read of Rabelais "laughing in his easy chair;" but who ever heard of Aristotle laughing in any chair, or Thomas Aquinas, or Emanuel Kant? Their very names suggest a nightmare of abstracts, concretes, syllogisms, enthymems, and categorical imperatives.



Conceive, if you can, the recovery of appetite by exercise in polemics, and the improvement of complexion by a regimen of metaphysics : suppose a man's getting rosy on statistics and plump on political economy. "*Laugh and grow fat.*" If you should grow exorbitantly fat by laughing, laughing still will keep you in healthy motion. It is a most admirable system of stationary gymnastics. Humor, I repeat, puzzles logic. Who can give a reason for the folly that is in him? But could logic be applied to humor, and dare I describe the syllogism that would suit it, here is my description : Its major should be good temper, its minor a good fancy, its middle term a good heart, and its conclusion a good laugh.

But in *that* which marks the supreme exertion of imaginative genius, the creation of character, all criticism, without hesitation and without division, awards to Cervantes his place with the greatest. And well it may. But what is it, let us ask, to create a character? It is to introduce into men's fancies a character new to them. The first demand of the mind on the imaginative writer is *novelty*. The being introduced must be a *new* acquaintance, a recognized addition to the ideal population already in existence. And this must not be merely numerical ; the new inhabitant must be a distinct individual ; he must be himself, and not another ; different from each, different from all ; no copy, no imitation, no counterfeit. But this difference must not be artificial or in a mere mannerism ; much less must it be exceptional and a monstrosity. It must be natural, founded in the reality of character, and accordant with the general laws of reason and experience.

Strange the new character may be, odd, eccentric ; but he is always amenable to these laws ; and we must find in his being the principles which form the basis of all spiritual existence. He must be included, therefore, within the circle of our understanding and our sympathies. He must, in fact, be congenial to us. He must not be *out of* humanity nor *against* it ; for in the one case we could not know him, and in the other we would repel him. But art deals only with the apprehensible ; so, likewise, it should deal mainly with the agreeable ; and if the revolting has any place in art, it must be one as subordinate as possible, since whatever should cause disgust or pain to predominate would be fatal to all the real purposes of art. In the degree, therefore, that a character occupies our attention, he must move our admiration or win our liking ; for, on the whole, we can bear to remain long only with the noble, the grand, the good, or the amusing. Some of these, or all, form the very reason of his existence. If he is not any of them, there is no reason for his being ; if he is the contrary of them, there is a sufficient reason to put him out of being by giving him to oblivion. Thus briefly we see what it is, not only to create a character, but what it is to create a character that will live, a character that deserves to live. These hasty observations might be extended to a deliberate essay, and, if adequately illustrated, to a volume. The import of them could be sustained, I think, in every original character in the literature of imagination from Hector to Hamlet, from the surly and snarling old Charon to the sage and smiling Mr. Pickwick. But all the exemplification that can be desired, Cervantes himself

most amply supplies. To create a character, a character that will live, that deserves to live, implies, as I have tried to show, one that has novelty, individuality, naturalness, and is of interest to us. Who has done this with greater success than Cervantes? and not in one character, but in many. Many, I say; for though two of his characters stand ever the most present to the mind, there is a multitude behind them; not in Don Quixote alone, but the numerous other writings of Cervantes. But in these two only, the knight and the squire, the qualities that I have spoken of shine with the most luminous distinctness. The novelty of both separately, and also in combined and contrasted originality, stands clearly out from all that had been and from all that is in the world of mind. Imitation has only served to prove that they are inimitable. Startling and unapproachable inventiveness, however, as they evince, singular and incomparable as is their individuality, they are yet the most congenial, the most social, the most companionable of creations. They are instinct with reality; and we could not destroy them if we would. They are so natural that they seem now immortal parts of nature. Wonderful indeed is genius — most simple, yet most inscrutable, are these illusions, in which as it pleases it involves us. A world it gives us which is not of the senses, and that world has its ages, its regions, its rulers, and its peoples; a world it is most genuine to us, though it is not the scene of our labors, but of our dreams; a world which we cannot afford to lose without losing the infinite ideal that is imbosomed in our life. In this world, amidst throngs of others, the knight and



squire of Cervantes still go on their way, still seeking for adventure — the knight lean and loyal, lance in hand, fearless of the universe ; and the squire jovial and plump, patient as his donkey, and as longing for good suppers. They cannot be annihilated : all they do and all they suffer are elements of reality, are true entities, inasmuch as they are agencies in emotion, and add, by thought, to the great aggregate of being. Nay, more : we feel that this knight and squire do and suffer consistently, according to their nature, which, as they do and suffer through us, is according to *ours*. We cannot but sympathize with them ; they excite our interest, and they permanently hold it.

The great moral qualities of high genius are brilliantly apparent in the writings of Cervantes, and especially in his immortal romance. We discern always in it a pure, tolerant, and philanthropic wisdom ; and the character of the author, we have evidence to assert, was the character of the man. Calmness, tolerance, and philanthropy, rare qualities in any age, were almost miraculous in that of Cervantes. It was an age of passion and conflict in both the outward life of man and the inward. The new world still drew myriads to its shores ; but the original impulse had ceased and given way to baser promptings. The charm of mystery was broken ; dreams of enthusiasm were over ; lust of gain trod down the love of enterprise, and adventure degenerated into rapine. It was an age when dominion was sought for, acquired, held without principle — when it was exercised without equity or mercy — in the strife for which the fortunes of the tyrants might be doubtful, but where the oppressions of the

people were certain. The native country of Cervantes stood out foremost in the age — foremost in its passions, and with no imbecile desire. Spain was covetous of empire ; and she had it : a great part of Europe was hers, comprising some of its most fruitful and most lovely regions. Her standard waved also on the shores of India ; and she ruled America from the Gulf of Mexico to Cape Horn. Spain coveted wealth ; and she had it : gold and silver from the west, gems and spices from the east ; at her own doors, horses, herds, and flocks, corn, wine, and oil — a land glorious to look on, and a people in many ways as glorious as their land. Spain coveted renown ; and she had it : her warriors by sea and land made her illustrious ; and her voyagers were among the boldest and bravest of discoverers. Her armies, it is true, were driven out of Holland, and her Armada was shattered by the elements and by England ; but Spain remained, notwithstanding, a grand and potent state among the empires of Christendom.

Not by outward objects alone were passions fiercely excited. Conscience and ideas lit them up with intenser fire. The year before Cervantes was born Luther died. This event indicates the course and character of the time. Mighty energies were at work ; new thoughts found new words. Whenever man is in earnest, words are things ; and in this case men *were* in earnest and words *were* things. Wherever the new words were accepted old things passed away. The storm which Luther evoked was rushing over his quiet grave ; and, while his clay reposed, his strong spirit seemed alive in the mighty sound. The voice which

raised this storm came out from the cloister ; out from the camp there came another voice to resist it. The conversion of Ignatius Loyola, the countryman of Cervantes, from the pleasures of the world to a zeal for heaven occurred a few years before the birth of our author. Before Cervantes was in manhood, the order of the Jesuits had become a wonder among men. The conservative spirit of the converted soldier was holding obstinate encounter with the revolutionary spirit of the innovating monk. Yet this encounter was but a portion of its work. Wonderful indeed was the order of the Jesuits. Ubiquitous in presence, it stood by the thrones of kings ; it entered into their secret chambers ; it lectured in colleges ; it taught in schools ; it sat by the bed of the noble and the beggar ; it conversed with the American Indian in his hut. From Delhi to Peking, and from the Canadas to Peru, you may find its track where missionary had never left a print before. Briarean in skill, it had hands for a hundred arts — to forge a cannon or to make a pin — to raise a tent or to build a temple — ready to paint the likeness of a Chinese monarch's stupid face or to take the measure of the stars. More than Protean in variety of adaptation, there was no nation or class to whose manners it could not conform and with whose speech it was not familiar. It wore the vesture of Brahmin, Bonze, and Mandarin with the grace of native habit, and it spoke their formidable dialects with the ease of native instinct. Invincible of spirit as it was universal in genius, it had courage to dare and it had ability to direct. When it failed, it had strength still in reserve to sustain it in endurance and to crown it

with the victory of martyr death. This order was peculiarly connected with Spain; from Spain it had its origin; and Spaniards were its earliest and its greatest men.

Spain, therefore, was a mighty element in the outward and inward agencies of the time, though causes were already at work which were hastening her downfall. She was great amidst the nations of the age; and she was as distinguished by her crimes as by her power. It was every where an age of combat and bigotry — an age that joined the wiles of craft to the ferocities of passion — an age that allowed rights only to the strong, and in which wars were as savage as they were frequent. Spain went with the rest of Europe in the worst propensities of the time. Now, it was in such an era, when men were destroying each other with a fury of national animosities that resembled the hatred of demons, when they were burning and breaking each other for opinions, that Cervantes gave his gracious lessons of kindness and good will; that he united practical sagacity with elevated thought; that he leagued both in the covenant of charity; that he joined wit to wisdom in graceful and consenting marriage; and that, not impairing instruction, but relieving it by exciting mirth, he cheered the spirit while he made it grave.

Only one element more in the genius of Cervantes will I note; and this is equally a characteristic of the man as of the writer: I mean *heroism*. His life was a heroism; and if that saying of Milton is true, that “he who would write an heroic poem must himself *live* one,” Cervantes was entitled to write an heroic

romance ; for verily he lived one. Beneath all the qualities of a misdirected mind in the leading character of his great romance there are the qualities also of a generous, a brave, and a pure heart. These are all heroic qualities. Courage is heroic ; rectitude is heroic, and thus, above all, is a grand and disinterested object. Combine these several attributes in a single character, raise it above the selfish maxims of the world, give it imagination and enthusiasm ; you have then, in essence, an heroic man. It is true that, if he cannot perceive the true relations of things, and will, in his blindness, act in contradiction to them, his heroism may even become mischievous. But that noble nature which the author represents in his knight as acting through a disordered fancy we find realized, sanely and wisely, in himself through the course of a manly life. Observe that courage in him which will not, even in fever, stay from the place of danger. “It is fit,” said he, at the battle of Lepanto, when his captain and his doctor would have restrained him in his berth because of severe illness, — “it is fit that I should be where my countrymen are ; and it is better that I should die in battle than that I should die in bed.” And that hilarity which belongs to the real hero, and which, being the health of the soul, outlives the health of the body, — how richly that hilarity was his ! It sustained him through his labors — labors fruitful in numerous works, to which I have not had time even to allude, that were the fitting kindred of Don Quixote, though lost in its greater splendor — tales that have the delicate graces of Boccaccio without his defilements — dramas also, one of which, Numantia,



founded on the history of the siege of that place by the Romans, is so pervaded by a terrible and tragic majesty that Sismondi calls Cervantes the *Castilian Æschylus*. The amount of labor which Cervantes accomplished is concealed by the grandeur of his last achievement; and in this Cervantes resembles Milton. Neither of them, indeed, had walked to his triumph unnoted; both of them had all along the way left their signal towers in the world; but *both*, in quitting the world, marked their departure from it by monuments of glory that overlies with the shadow of their massive height the structures which they had erected on their course behind. But his hilarity sustained him in suffering as well as in toil. It bore him gallantly over the waves of adversity — nerved him against the breakers that dashed him ever from the shores of court favor when court favor was an author's life. It enabled him to laugh at, and not to curse, the wrong that would have robbed him of the fame which was all that he had from the labor and the sweat of his genius; and to the last it did not desert him. As he rode on his mule to Esquivias, borne down with despair, he fell into company with two students, who spoke of his name but did not know his person. He conversed with them jocularly and pleasantly, left them to go laughing on their way, dismounted at his door to be carried, in not many days, out through that door to his grave. The whole history of Cervantes in captivity is one of disinterestedness, valor, honor, and truth. He would expose his own life to shelter the lives of his friends; he would take the whole blame upon himself of efforts to escape; he would declare that no tor-

ture should compel him to confess; and by his chivalrous boldness he would surprise the Turks themselves into generosity. When his funds were scanty, he helped to redeem those who were less important than himself; and when he could not help to redeem he helped to feed them. But, though he would not confess, neither would he prevaricate. When he spoke he told the truth; he told it faithfully, he told it fearlessly; and when a hair seemed to threaten his existence, he would not turn it aside even by the whisper of a lie.

There is much, therefore, in the character of Don Quixote which I take to be an image of that of Cervantes; and the image is not ignoble. Don Quixote is valor crazed in armor. He is the spirit that fought at Lepanto gone among selfish men astray. In all moral and social graces of the soul he is a being full of worth and dignity. His honor admits not of suspicion; his probity is above even the imagination of impeachment. He cares not for power except to do good, and for fame only as it illumines virtue. I suspect that even the follies of Don Quixote had their counterparts in the character of the author; I suspect that he was no better manager than the knight, and that he was not far from being the same kind of reader. I place him before my thought with his grave face and his pensive eye, bent in rapt attention over the pages of Amadis de Gaul. I watch him under an orange tree, at the decline of the sun, arise from Don Belianus of Greece, that has served as a pillow for his siesta. He, as well as the knight, had his struggles with rude men; and he, as well as the knight, was,



we may be sure, often esteemed a fool. The knight struck his windmill giant bravely, and wondered, of course, that *he*, and not the windmill giant, was flat upon the earth. But Cervantes, we can conceive, had often to attempt feats quite as appalling and as satisfactorily disastrous; as, for instance, to make three ducats do the work of five, or to exchange the golden treasures of his brain for even the copper treasures of the bank. Again I repeat that, when we interpret the character of Cervantes by his genius, and seek the direction of his genius in his character, we do no injustice to either; and when in his knight we look for both, to both we then do honor. His knight is a gentleman in the finest sense of that fine word; he is a scholar that has filled his mind with much learning and many thoughts; he has drawn not a little from books, more from man and nature; but in the written pages, in the living earth, and in the silent stars he has not missed the spiritual and the eternal—he has not failed of God. His knight is that without being which a gentleman is but a shape and a scholar but a sound: he is an honest and a good man—that which gives to the form of courtesy the life of charity—that which adorns philosophy with the grace of modesty—that which beautifies knowledge with the sanctity of truth. What shall we say more? Only this: in Don Quixote they are the idea and the shadow; in Cervantes they are the reality and the substance.

## DON QUIXOTE.

THE *spirit* of humor changes never ; but its form does constantly. For though humor has a relation to the primal faculties of human nature as near and as direct as pathos, it is more variable and more temporary in its methods of combination and expression. Man is as permanently a creature of laughter as he is of tears ; but as the sources of his tears are more deeply seated in his nature than the sensibilities of laughter, the agencies that reach the fountains of weeping are at once more simple and more intense, therefore more uniform and more enduring, than those which move the spirit, or rather, perhaps, the nerves, of mirthfulness. These profound sentiments of our being, which bind it to its most solemn interests, and out of which arise its seriousness and its griefs, are not so related to passing incidents and manners as are the associations by which merriment is excited. The sound of a word, the allusion to a name, the turn of a phrase, the implication of a supposedly understood meaning may be a medium for the soul of humor ; and the impression, where the medium is truly vital, is instantaneous and irresistible : for the same reason, it is often local, limited, and transient. The power that reaches into grave emotion, the power that reaches

the consciousness, which rational and immortal man carries out of each hour and out of each scene, acts on all within him that is immortal, clings to the identity of the individual, and is in the compass of the universality of the race. The serious and the tragic do not depend upon the word, but on the spirit; not on the mode, but on the import. Tragedy remains young when comedy has grown haggard; and tragedy is a living voice when comedy has been long dead, even as a sounding echo. When we read Cicero's treatise upon oratory, nothing is more easy of comprehension to us than the examples he gives us of ancient eloquence — nothing is more unintelligible to us than his illustrations of ancient joking. All that is epic and ethical we can feel from Homer and Plato to Shakespeare and Bacon; but though all the humorists along the same line had survived we could but little understand them, and of all writers they would be the hardest texts for critical antiquarians. We have a humor for each district not felt out of it, in each generation that dies with it; and humor, as I have said, so depends on the quickness of immediate association for its effect, that, even when of the highest order, time and distance are all but deadly to its force and freshness. Don Quixote, considered as a story of humor, must, so far as it is such, be subject to these limitations; but the comic in Don Quixote is so elevated by the serious, and the serious is so enlivened by the comic, that it cannot but live, and it cannot but be felt within the sphere of literature, while humanity continues the mixture that it is — of laughter and of tears.

Certain books, a person of mature years takes for

granted, every individual of any reading knows. Don Quixote is one of these books. To consider a person out of the pale of common culture for not having read Don Quixote would be judgment rather rash, since there are some who have not read Shakspeare; since even great men have been known that quoted Shakspeare for the Bible. But it is no reckless matter to assume that most persons of ordinary education understand the main purport of Don Quixote. The story, as they are aware, was written early in the seventeenth century, and in Spain, in which there was then, as there is still, more of the stationary and the old than in any other country in Europe. The middle ages lay then with more of their dim ideas over Spain than they did over other countries; though even over most countries in Europe they still hung with a heavy and illusive twilight. The ideas of chivalry had not yet passed away; in reality, they were vital, even in practical England, in the adventurous action of Sir Walter Raleigh and in the romantic sentiment of Sir Philip Sidney. But in Spain they were passionate in the popular imagination; and they were kept alive in the utmost absurdity and distortion by the wildest romances.

It was to ridicule these romances that Cervantes wrote Don Quixote. He conceives of a man who gets the images of such stories into his head and ponders over them until they seem realities. This man takes the world to be a field for chivalry; every thing in the world assumes a form to his fancy that answers to a chivalric illusion. He supposes nothing so much wanted among men as a knight errant; and, imagining that he is in all points qualified, he prepares to go out

into the world that he dreams is but waiting for his exertions to glorify and to regenerate it. He wants a squire, and prevails on a clownish peasant to assume that character. He must have a mistress, and places before his mind in that relation a country wench whom he might have seen in his rambles. He calls her by a romantic name, and dresses her out in all brilliant qualities. He accoutres himself and mounts himself for the mission, and sets out to battle with the vulgar, actual, hard, material world in the sincerity of his intense and enthusiastic illusion. The first mistake he makes is that of taking a windmill for a giant, and in the attack getting sorely bruised. His mistakes with men are not less palpable nor more pleasant. And, throughout, the contact of his illusion with actuality is much of the same character. The series of mishaps and their consequences thus arising those who have read the story know; they know, also, the quantity of beauty and pathos that mingles with it; they know, too, the goodness and the wisdom of the knight except in the aspect of his insanity. With the details I deal not; my concern is only with the soul and import of the whole. Only to one incident towards the close I would allude, because it is the purport of some extended comment; and that is, the one wherein the knight and the squire fall in with a duke and duchess. These great persons of quality follow the example of the vulgar; they humor the knight's madness, cajole the squire's folly, make both believe in the reality of their relations, and under this deception enjoy a groundling fun, and sustain by wicked tricks a vile and inhuman amusement.



In attempting to speak on the general scope and spirit of the romance, *Don Quixote*, I pretend to no analytic or comprehensive criticism. Criticism of *Don Quixote* would, indeed, be a bold presumption or a useless task. The generations of civilized men for more than two centuries, the vulgar and the learned, have with one consent allowed it the supremacy in prose fiction. There is no critic, however national, who thinks of placing any story of his own country, however popular, above the story of the immortal Spaniard. *Don Quixote* bears the same relation to prose fiction that the *Iliad* does to epic poetry; and even should a finer romance come into existence, it will preserve this relation by virtue of priority, originality, and traditional association. Persons may be who cannot enjoy this wonderful creation; nor would I on that account impugn their taste. If mere enjoyment gave a writer his place in fame, take the evidence of Dr. Johnson as to the number who enjoy Milton, and Milton's place in Fame's temple must be low indeed. Yet, upon the score of mere enjoyment, if the votes could be collected of the millions who in youth and age have luxuriated in *Don Quixote*, Cervantes would be crowned among the kings of story with acclamations of enthusiasm. It is not, however, for mere pleasure that I have been drawn to seek in this work matter for reflection. I have been drawn to it by its pregnant seriousness, by its varied philosophy of human character and human life. My aim is to be suggestive rather than logical, and not so much to excite laughter as to quicken thought.

The leading purpose of the author is evident from



the beginning, and it is not left out of view for a moment to the end. It was plainly the intention of Cervantes to write a burlesque on books of chivalry, but not by any means to ridicule chivalry itself; to laugh aloud and make others laugh at compilations of insanity and folly; not in the least to pour derision on generous dreams, on pure idealism, on noble designs, on fervid imagination, or on lofty enthusiasm. Unquestionably the author's original idea was that of a burlesque, and probably at first it was nothing more. But a commanding spirit such as he could never have confined himself within limits so contracted; never could he have compressed his abundant fancy, his penetrating intellect, his mature learning, his earnest sympathies, his acute and accurate observation within the circle of an epic lampoon. To genius, purpose is seldom more than an occasion. The purpose may be humble, but that purpose may be the occasion to a grand creation. Genius cannot, like talent, anticipate its end, and so deliberately adhere to a fixed adaptation of constructive means. Thus it is especially in works of imagination. In these the life of genius does not enter into previously devised forms. The life and the form grow together by a development in which the organization and the spirit are contemporaneous and inseparable. Genius, therefore, often reverses the originating intention, and always goes beyond it. Thus Cowper intended simply to write a trifle for a lady, and produced the greatest work of his life — the Task. Fielding intended to make fun of Richardson; but, in writing Joseph Andrews, he created Parson Adams. Nay, in mere sentiment, without

any design to be humorous, but seriously and in his own person, he has passages as mawkish as the worst of Richardson's. Cervantes, on setting out, may only have proposed to laugh absurd romances out of existence ; but the laugh was soon combined with noble harmonies, and constantly it was lost in them. Beneath the laugh there was inspiration finer than Momus gives : the satirist was a poet, and ridicule was changed into song.

Still, we must confess, the plan is a parody ; it is a parody upon the fictions which constituted the amusing reading of the age. In order to show its absurdity, the author translates a positive character of the age into a romantic character of its reading. He takes then for his hero a gentleman of small fortune, but of good education. His means are not opulent, but they are sufficient. His housekeeper and niece manage his worldly concerns, and then he is at leisure and liberty. This leisure and liberty he devotes to the unremitting perusal of romances of chivalry. His mind is dislocated. He loses sight of his personality and his age. He is often incoherent and often confused. At one instant his desire appears to be to restore the age of chivalry ; at another time he seems to think that he is living in it ; but that he is living in it is the most permanent feeling of his life. He determines to become a knight errant. Love was the religion of chivalry ; and, next to heaven, woman was the adoration of knighthood. A knight not in love would have been as a soldier wanting courage ; a knight having no mistress would have been as a soldier without a sword. The hero accordingly puts himself in love by force of

imagination ; and in Dulcinea he finds an object as imaginary as his passion. A squire is as essential to a knight as a mistress. The raw material for a squire is a rude peasant, half cunning and half foolish, who, by contact with his master, is afterwards shaped into the immortal Sancho. Accoutred in rusty armor, mounted upon bareboned Rosinante, accompanied by Sancho astride of Dapple, — a donkey as renowned as the squire that rode him, — Don Quixote sallies forth in search of adventures. We have then presented to us a conflict between crazy enthusiasm and commonplace routine — between the ideal fancies of the bewildered hero and the ordinary events of the actual world. Out of this conflict the adventures naturally arise ; and, carrying it on to the end, the author evolves a succession of incidents, which, for interest and variety, has nothing equal to it in the whole compass of prose fiction.

The incidents of the story are not only wonderful, therefore, in their variety, but wonderful in the means by which they are created. Without leaving the common earth or common events, Cervantes excites curiosity and fancy to the utmost. He is, as he pleases, the wizard or the satirist. While deriding romances, he becomes in the highest degree romantic ; and, while he forces laughter at extravagance, renders the possible almost as wild and strange as the supernatural machinery which it is his design to ridicule. If magic changes the heroic into the vulgar to vex Don Quixote, it also changes for our delight the vulgar into the heroic. Is it that Cervantes takes himself the place of the old enchanters, and, while seeming to furnish a

countercharm to their cunning, gets around us by spells more potent of his own? We, as well as the hero, are again in the days of chivalry. To us, as unto him, the windmill becomes a giant; and to us, as unto him, the inn is transformed to a castle. We, as well as the hero, are again in the days of necromancy. We dream queer dreams with him in the solitude of the mountain; and with him we see unearthly sights in the cave of Montesinos. Taken singly as a narrative, this work is a miracle of genius. In the mere story we have a most surprising range of feelings and activities. Within this range we have persons of every grade and every profession. We have, besides, numberless oddities and individualities of character. We have evidence of an insight that has gone searchingly through the windings of the soul, and of an observing faculty that has traversed the length and breadth of society. We find abstract thought in union with practical sense, and satirical sagacity tempered with a gentle wisdom. We find learning that does not stiffen, but mellow diction, that enriches the texture of the composition, but does not overlay the surface. This learning is indeed so gracefully woven into the web of the narrative that it is only on reflection that we discover the vastness of its amount. Although the outward form of the story is burlesque and satirical, there is a soul within it of grief and pity. Although it treats of life on one side in a spirit of idealism, and on another in a spirit of criticism, — pushing the idealism to absurdity and the criticism to irony, — it is not that the irony may flatter the cynical — it is not that the absurdity may amuse the idle; it is that both the

irony and the absurdity may suggest lessons of a wholesome moderation and of a generous philosophy.

The leading character in this romance has been variously and even oppositely criticized. Sismondi regards him in a serious light, and seems to side with those who consider his story as the most melancholy book that was ever written. "Cervantes," he observes, "has in some degree exhibited the vanity of noble feelings and the illusions of heroism. He has described in Don Quixote an accomplished man, who is, notwithstanding, a constant object of ridicule; a man brave beyond all that history can boast, who confronts the most terrific, not only of mortal, but of supernatural, perils; a man whose high sense of honor permits him not to hesitate for a single moment in the accomplishment of his promises or to deviate in the slightest degree from truth. As disinterested as brave, he combats only for virtue; and when he covets a kingdom, it is only that he may bestow it on his faithful squire. He is the most constant and the most faithful of lovers—the most humane of warriors—the most accomplished of cavaliers. With a taste as refined as his intellect is cultivated, he surpasses in goodness, in loyalty, and in bravery the Amadis and Orlandos whom he has chosen for his models. His most generous enterprises end, however, only in blows and bruises. His glory is the bane of those around him. The giants with whom he believes he is fighting are only windmills. The ladies whom he delivers from the enchanters are harmless women, whom he terrifies upon their journey and whose servants he maltreats. While he is thus redressing wrongs and



repairing injuries, the bachelor, Alonzo Lopez, very properly tells him, 'I do not precisely understand your mode of redressing wrongs; but as for me, you have made me crooked when I was straight enough before; and have broken my leg, which will never be set right all the days of my life. Nor do I understand how you repair injuries; for that which I have received from you will never be repaired. It is the most unfortunate adventure that ever befell me when I met you in search of adventures.'" In this manner does Sismondi, with brevity and clearness, give the poetic side of Don Quixote's character.

Hallam presents another version of the famous knight. The author, he maintains, beginning with the intention of ridiculing the fictions of the age, adheres to it steadily through the first part. The critic insists that, in this division of the story, the Don is simply a madman. He fancies that chivalry still exists; he derives his sentiments from its romances and imitates their incidents. In the second part he holds that Cervantes changed his plan; made his hero wise and eloquent; and, therefore, gave the world two Don Quixotes. In one part we have in Don Quixote nothing but the maniac; in the other we have combined, in a single character, the maniac and the author. But Don Quixote is no more a maniac in the first part than he is in the second; and, if talents can be allowed him in the second part, they cannot be denied to him in the first. In the first part, as well as in the second, Cervantes not only insists that his hero possessed sane qualities, but sane qualities of a high order; nay, he illustrates that fact by causing him to



utter some of the finest passages in the book. It is in the first part that Cervantes puts into his mouth an eloquent oration on the comparative merit of arts and letters. "Don Quixote," the narrator observes, "pursued his discourse so rationally that his auditors could scarcely think him insane. On the contrary, most of them, being gentlemen to whom the exercise of arms appertains, they listened to him with particular pleasure." Still more: "The auditors were concerned that a man who possessed so good an understanding should, on a particular point, be so egregiously in the want of it." Surely the instances of madness in a single direction are not so infrequent as to place such madness out from the use of fiction. Were they even less frequent than they are, the character of Don Quixote would still be conceivable, and consistent with romance. Let it be considered, too, that the insanity of Don Quixote was not only partial, but very transient. It came upon him late in life; it lasted but a few weeks; it closed in the lucidness of an exhausted and dying man. The character is true to itself when judged, as it ought to be, poetically; for, after the first chapters, Cervantes raised it into poetry. It is true that in the second part Don Quixote is more frequently wise and eloquent than in the first; because, in the second part, he is oftener in society that could elicit wisdom and call out eloquence. Taking the whole result, the character has in both parts the continuity and oneness which constitute artistic identity.

Appreciated in his entirety, the knight is a glorious inhabitant of the imagination world. He appears every where in fine relations to humanity. In his worst

mistakes he is lovable ; and there is much more in him of what is admirable than of what is laughable. He is kind in his home, and in his neighborhood he is respected. With men he is frank and brave ; with women he is refined and more than courteous. Of high bearing and of jealous dignity, he does not shun the humble ; and, though no abuser of the rich, if a side is to be taken, he takes it with the poor. Filled with thoughts which, though out of season and out of place, are yet as sublime as they are benevolent, he lives always in sight of good intentions ; he is delighted in the joy of all around him ; it gives him pleasure to promote and to increase it ; he designs to exalt his friends ; he designs to bless the world ; and if, while walking in this trance of generous visions, he comes into rude collision with stern actuality, — if in this collision he gets wounded and bruised, — he does not complain or whine, but is as cheerful as he is patient. He is innocent of heart ; pure in his thoughts ; in principles, of invincible integrity ; in actions, of stainless honesty and honor ; in speech, of virgin delicacy and of gracious elegance. Don Quixote really never falls in our respect. He is never degraded by his mischances. He is always elevated, and elevated in spite of the most ridiculous situations. He does not for a moment forget his personal dignity ; for in his most infatuated actions there is a spirit of grandeur. Look, for example, at the nobleness of his ideas on his supposed vocation. “ Knight errantry,” he contends, “ is equal to poetry, and something beyond it. It is a science, also, which comprehends all or most of the other sciences. The knight must be learned in the law,

experienced in distributive and commutative justice, to assign each man his own. He must be conversant with divinity, to explain clearly and distinctly the Christian faith which he professes. He must be skilled in medicine, that he may know diseases and how to cure them. He must be an astronomer, that he may be able always to ascertain time and place by looking at the stars. He must be adorned with all the theological and cardinal virtues; he must have faith in God; he must be constant in love; he must be chaste in his thoughts, modest in his words, liberal in good works, valiant in exploits, patient in toils, charitable to the needy; and steadfastly he must adhere to truth, even at the expense of life." "The poor knight," he again observes, "can only manifest his rank by his virtues. He must be well bred, courteous, kind, and obliging; not proud, not arrogant, no murmurer; above all, he must be charitable." "Since, my Sancho," he exclaims, in another place, "we seek a Christian reward, let our works be conformable to the religion we profess. In slaying giants, we must destroy pride and arrogance; we must vanquish envy by generosity; wrath, by a serene and humble spirit; gluttony and sloth, by temperance and vigilance; licentiousness, by chastity; and indolence, by traversing the world in search of every honorable opportunity of renown." Cervantes has, in spirit, made his hero according to the standard which his hero here applies to knighthood. Richly endowed in moral qualities, he is not less richly endowed intellectually. He is a man of culture. He is also a man of genius—of genius with all its intensities and sympathies. His faculties are not balanced,

but they are uncommon; and, when not disturbed by his disorder, they exhibit every sort of mental power. His memory is quick and retentive; his imagination strong, brilliant, and graceful; his intellect active and acute. His genius has an eloquence that does it justice in perfect speech—speech that answers to every play of emotion and to every mood of thought; that is, grave for deliberate wisdom, musical for poetic fancy, simple for easy talk, gathering force as needed from gentleness to vehemence; it rises as the sentiment rises, from familiar aphorism to lofty declamation. Thus it singularly happens, that, while Cervantes was scourging fictitious errants out of the world, he was presenting an ideal of the truest knight-hood that has ever been in it; indeed, that must always be in it, until manly principles and disinterested affections cease to have existence. Such knight-hood must last and live while minds of high design and hearts of wise embrace last and live. No weapon of ridicule can harm it; the sharpest arrows of the most burning wit are shivered and quenched against its panoply of virtue.

One of the most striking characteristics of the *Cervantic* manner is the way in which dignity is so often in union with oddity, tenderness with burlesque, and the pathetic with the droll. The sacking of Don Quixote's library is an instance. This is one of the finest scenes in the book. Grave and broad, ludicrous and yet wise, it is eminently *Cervantic*. The grouping of the characters is excellent. They admirably contrast with and relieve each other. There is the sedate but cheerful curate, evidently learned in the lore

of his profession, yet showing by his knowledge and his likings that he has walked in the enchanted gardens of romance, and that occasionally he lingers in them still. Like Dr. Johnson, he cannot let any sort of book pass through his hands without a perusal of its title and a peep into its contents. He seems to love a book because it is a *book*; and it is in sorrow more than anger that he gives the worst and the most absurd over to the secular arm of the housekeeper and the niece. The shrewd, observant, intelligent, good-natured barber answers well to the place he holds — almost beside, scarcely below, this mild and affectionate priest. There he works busily, as the intermediate official between the judge and the executioners; sometimes suggesting a remark, sometimes venturing on an opinion, but always submitting to the decision of his superior. The housekeeper is prepared to carry into effect every sentence of condemnation with an alacrity that would satisfy the most zealous advocate of capital punishment. Nor is the niece on her side slow to aid. “There is no reason,” said the niece, “why any of them should be spared; for they have all been mischief makers: so let them all be thrown out of the window into the court yard, and, having made a pile of them, set fire to it.” The priest falls upon volumes of poetry. These he is inclined to spare; for he thinks they can do no harm. “O, sir,” said the niece, “pray order them to be burned with the rest; for, should my uncle be cured of this distemper of chivalry, he may possibly, by reading such books, take it into his head to turn shepherd and wander through the fields playing on a pipe: what is still worse, he may turn



*poet*, which they say is an incurable and a contagious disease."

While these deliberations were proceeding Don Quixote was confined to his chamber, after returning wounded and bruised from his first sally. But "the first thing which occurred to him when he left his bed was to visit his books ; and, not finding the room, he went up and down looking for it ; when, coming to the former situation of the door, he felt with his hands, and stretched about on all sides, without speaking a word for some time." His friends had the place closed up ; and his niece persuades him that enchanters have taken away his library. The poor knight groping about for his books, for his long-known and much-loved companions, is truly a pathetic picture. His very madness made these books the more valuable to him ; for it made them real. With what riches and glories did his books fill that small chamber ! When he entered into his closet and shut himself from the outward sphere of sense, — when he called before him the spirits that slept around him on the shelves, — then his estate was no barren patch in La Mancha : it was an empire ; it was a world ; it was more than one world ; it was many worlds : then his life was no worn thing of half a century ; it was an unwasting and a perpetual youth. There he conversed with King Arthur and paid compliments to Queen Madisama ; spent summer days with Palmerin of England and wore out winter nights with Amadis of Gaul ; fought with the giant Morgante, consulted with the magician Merlin, and held tourney with the companions of the round table.

In the illusions, too, of the hero about Dulcinea,



there is as much of what is noble and affecting as there is of what is laughable and amusing. Dulcinea was the name which Don Quixote gave to the mistress of his heart ; for a knight must of necessity have a sovereign lady to whom his loyalty and love should be devoted. The original of this imaginary mistress was a peasant girl of whom he had formerly been enamoured ; although it does not appear that she either knew of his passion or cared about it. This peasant girl — as the story has it — resided in a neighboring town named Toboso ; and thence the high-sounding designation, “Dulcinea del Toboso.” The rustic maiden is, in the imagination of her heroic lover, transformed to a princess of mental perfection, of dazzling beauty ; and, being so transformed, the inward image of his mind appears always to him as an outward reality. Setting out on his third sally, he determines to visit this peerless damsel ; and, for that purpose, takes the direction of Toboso. On a former occasion he intrusted Sancho with a letter to this princess, with the promise of three ass colts if successful in his mission. The cunning squire pretended that he had delivered the letter. But *his* vulgar conceptions can keep no pace with the high-wrought fancies of his master. Unwittingly Sancho says, that, when he saw Dulcinea, she was winnowing wheat. Don Quixote assures him that he was under a delusion — that what he took for a farm yard must, indeed, be the court of a palace, in which this “paragon of gentility and beauty” was amusing herself with works of richest embroidery. Enchanters must have deceived him. Sancho, who had been at his wits’ end, takes this hint, and uses it afterwards to deceive

the Don. They approach Toboso. Although it is yet night, Don Quixote insists on being led to Dulcinea's palace. Sancho is confounded. He has to confess that he has never seen the Lady Dulcinea. "I am as incapable," he says, "of giving any account of the Lady Dulcinea as I am of pulling the moon by the nose:" and it is now, in telling the truth, that the knight accuses him of lying. "Sancho, Sancho," answered Don Quixote, "there is a time to jest, and a time when jests are unseasonable. What! because I say that I never saw nor spoke to the mistress of my soul, must thou say so likewise, when thou knowest it to be untrue?" Sancho then persuades his master to retire to a neighboring grove and there await the result of his message to Dulcinea. When Sancho had got his master thus concealed he went but a little distance on his way to Toboso: then he alighted from Dapple, and, seating himself under a tree, began, in his perplexity, a dialogue of Sancho with Sancho. "Tell me now, brother Sancho," quoth he, "whither is your worship going? Are you going to seek some ass that is lost?" "No, verily." "Then what are you going to seek?" "Why, I go to look for a thing of nothing — a princess; the sum of beauty, and all heaven together." "Well, Sancho, and where do you think to find all this?" "Where? In the great city of Toboso." "Very well; and, pray, who sent you on this errand?" "Why, the renowned knight Don Quixote de la Mancha, who redresses wrongs, who gives drink to the hungry and meat to the thirsty." "All this is mighty well: and do you know her house, Sancho?" "My master says it must

be some royal palace or stately castle." "And have you ever seen her?" "Neither I nor my master have ever seen her." "And do you think it would be right or advisable that the people of Toboso should know you are coming to kidnap their princesses and to lead them astray? What if, for this offence, they should come and grind your ribs to powder, and not leave a whole bone in your skin?" "Truly they would be much in the right of it; unless they please to consider that *I*, being only a messenger, am not in fault." "Trust not to that, Sancho; for the Manchegans are very choleric, and their honor so ticklish that it will not bear touching." Sancho started from his reverie and bethought him that his master was mad—a man who took windmills for giants; mules, dromedaries, flocks of sheep for armies of fighting men. This being the case, it would not be difficult to make him believe that a country wench, the first he should alight on, was the Lady Dulcinea. "If he should not believe it," soliloquizes Sancho, "I will swear it; if *he* swears, I will outswear him; and if he persists, I will persist the more; so that mine shall still be uppermost, come what will. By this plan I may, perhaps, tire him of sending me on such messages, or he may take it into his head that some wicked enchanter has changed his lady's form out of spite." Then occurs the incident of the three country wenches riding upon donkeys. Sancho persuades his master that Dulcinea and her two attendants, all riding upon palfreys, have come to visit him. Catching the halter of one of the donkeys, and trying to imitate Don Quixote's phraseology, Sancho exclaims, "Queen, princess, duchess of

beauty, let your highness and greatness be pleased to receive into your grace and good liking your captive knight, who stands there all turned into stone, all disorder, and without any pulse, to find himself before your magnificent presence. I am Sancho Panza, his squire; and he is that wayworn knight Don Quixote, otherwise the knight of the sorrowful figure." Don Quixote, kneeling down by Sancho, — already on his knees, — takes a still higher strain. The damsels, very effectually astonished, not less at the personages than at their language, got away from them as quickly as they could, and in a manner, too, that left the mirror of chivalry confounded at the flower of ladyhood. The half bewilderment and puzzled doubt of Don Quixote at the close of this scene is not more ludicrous than it is pathetic. "But tell me, Sancho," he inquires, "that which appeared to me a panel, — was it a side saddle, or a pillion?" "It was a side saddle," answered Sancho, "with a field covering worth half a kingdom." "And that I could not see all this!" murmured the knight. "Again I say, and a thousand times I will repeat it, I am the most unfortunate of men."

In nothing is the insanity of Don Quixote more evident than in this dream of Dulcinea; and yet there was much that was noble in the dream. It was a dream of a pure and a glowing soul. It was a dream which a beautiful nature only could nourish and sustain; it was a dream which a beautiful nature alone could conceive or could enjoy. It idealized woman and it threw honor over womanhood; and the ideal was not merely that of outward loveliness, but of inward

excellence. Such a vision came never from a gross or sensual mind ; but from a mind that, even in its disorder, enshrined the female character in the light of sanctity and reverence. This lustre that burned in his own heart flashed out upon the plainest face, and, for the moment, covered it with rapturous illumination. The peasant girl was not always in his vision a princess, but never failed to receive from him the homage of a woman ; and in the shepherdess clad in russet by the lowliest door he saw one as entitled to his respect as if her hut were indeed a palace. The mistake which clad rustic girls with royal apparel, and which gave to homely maidens resplendent loveliness, was one of those mistakes of which Charles Lamb remarks that they come from *within*. It was the lambency of a soul, delirious though it was, bathing all that was feminine in its own effulgence. Cervantes, in his own person and in that of his hero, treats woman in all ranks with deference and affection. Some exceptions there may be, but not so many as to be discordant with his general tone of courtesy and reverence. Such is not the usual manner in comic or satiric literature. No treatment can be more grinding, more derisive, more derogatory than that which woman has had in this kind of literature — no treatment more suited to undermine belief in her truth and to infuse scepticism as to her purity. ( But the man who mocks woman or abases her, who holds her up to laughter or reproach, brilliantly as he may write or speak, has not the diviner element of genius in his breast. The genius of every man who writes out of a large humanity does always bless and beautify her. Indeed, all such



genius has in it a feminine element : by means of that element it enters into the heart of woman, and, through emotion, understands her deepest nature. Woman, however, pays back to manly genius more than it gives her. She does much to correct and to purify it—to guard it from asperity of temper—to draw it from seclusive meditation—to hold it in living interest with the common relations of the world ; and, being a gentle medium between the actual and ideal, she softens the contrast, reconciles the isolation of thought to the geniality of life, and gives to the labors of art the encouragement of affection. Womanly sympathy is to manly genius what we might conceive Ophelia might have been to Hamlet had Hamlet been less perplexed and had Ophelia been less afflicted.)

And Sancho, too, — how rich he is on the other side ! — at once clown and critic, cynic and buffoon, philosopher and simpleton — a tone flowing over with potages and proverbs — a walking concentration of jokes and juices — an incarnation of gormandizing and grumbling — an imbodied mockery of etherealism, the concentrated personification of a carnival. He is the Falstaff of the vulgar. After his own manner, he is as sensual ; but the sensuality of Sancho is that of an unlettered and superstitious peasant ; the sensuality of Falstaff is that of an educated and unbelieving epicurean. He has as loose notions of right and wrong as Falstaff ; and he holds unprofitable ardor in the same contempt. Like Falstaff, he is of easy temper and of easy conscience ; he has similar abhorrence of leanness and thin potations ; and in the measure of



his condition and his culture, the squire of Cervantes, as the knight of Shakspeare, is not only witty in himself, but the cause of wit in others. There is one thing in which Sancho has resemblance to his master; and that is, according to his nature, he is as much a visionary. A man may be a visionary of coarseness as well as of idealism. The lowest natures have their dreams; the voluptuary dreams as well as the saint; the hog of Epicurus as well as the watcher of the temple. Stout people, of middle age, have their dreams as well as those who are younger and more slender; and there are dreams of turtle soup as well as dreams of turtle doves. Men who are active and anxious about the main chance have their dreams as well as those who forget it in higher fancies; and the market has its visions as well as the millennium. The politician has his dreams as well as the poet. The young bard that broods over his maiden epic is not more elated than the new member that broods over his maiden speech; and if the bard fondly hopes that he may make a large stride towards the pinnacle of Parnassus, no less fondly does the new member anticipate that he is about to move for a high place in the cabinet. The most earthly dream as well as the most enthusiastic; and, while they often dream as wildly as Don Quixote, they dream at the same time as selfishly as Sancho. The squire had visions as well as his master; but they were of another kind and of another order. The master dreamed of great deeds; the squire dreamed of good eating. The dream of the knight was of a regenerated world, in which right would be vindicated and wrong would be conquered; the dream

of the squire was of a comfortable island, where he might sleep as many hours as he desired, and have pullets when he awoke fatter than Camacho's.

The culminating point of Sancho's character is in the opening of the second part. He is not so rustic as when he set out; and his discourse is not so inconsistent with his intellect or station as at times it appears afterwards. He has mind enough to give his conversation point, but not so much as to take it out from the sphere of reality. He presents himself in this stage of the narrative as a most original compound of shrewdness and absurdity — of oddity and naturalness — of grotesque assumption and pompous airs — of sordid cunning, yet devoted fidelity. His master, after the first sally, is brought home bruised and broken. Sancho, too, has suffered; but he is soon able to come and see his master. His dispute then with the housekeeper, who is unwilling to admit him, is admirable. "Paunch-gutted!" she exclaims, "get home! It is by you that our master is led astray and carried rambling about the country like a vagabond." "Thou devilish housekeeper!" retorted Sancho, "'tis I am led astray. It was your master that led me this dance. He tempted me from home with promises of an island, which I still hope for." "May the cursed island choke thee!" answered the niece. "And, pray, what are islands? Are they any thing eatable, glut-ton, cormorant, as thou art?" "They are not to be eaten," said Sancho, "but governed." Not less amusing are his commentaries, as the bachelor Carrasco remarks, on the adventures which he and his master have gone through as recorded in the first part of the

history. "Peace, Sancho," said Don Quixote; "let the signor bachelor proceed, that I may know what is further said of me." "And of *me*, too," quoth Sancho. "As sure as I live," answered the bachelor, "you are the second person of the history; nay, there are some that would rather hear you talk than the finest fellows of them all; though there are some who charge you with being too credulous in expecting the government of that island." "There is still sunshine on the wall," quoth Don Quixote; "and when Sancho is more advanced in age, with the experience that years bestow, he will be better qualified to be a governor than he is at present." "'Fore God, sir," quoth Sancho, "if I am not fit to govern an island at these years, I shall be no better able at the age of Mathusalem. I have seen governors ere now, who, in my opinion, do not come up to the sole of my shoe; and yet they are called 'your lordship,' and eat their victuals upon plate. I can tell the bachelor Carrasco that my master will not throw the kingdom he gives me into a rotten sack; for I have felt my pulse; I find myself strong enough to rule kingdoms, to govern islands; and so much I have signified before to my master."

Sancho had not the same confidence about his wife; for, if Heaven were to rain down kingdoms upon earth, he doubted if any crown of them would fit her. We have a dialogue between Sancho and his wife which rather confirms this idea. "Look you, Sancho," said his wife; "since you have been a knight errant man you talk in such a roundabout manner that nobody understands you." "It is enough, wife, that God understands me. See," he says, "that Dapple is

cared for. We are not going," he tells her, "to a wedding, but to roam about the world, and to give and take with giants." And all this, he avers, would be flower of lavender if they had not to do with Yuangesians and enchanted Moors. He is, however, determined to marry his daughter to a grandee. "Not so, Sancho," answered Teresa; "the best way is to marry her to her equal; because, in a loftier station, she would not know how to conduct herself. "Peace, fool!" quoth Sancho. "She has only to practise two or three years, and gravity will sit as well on her as if it were made for her." "Take care what you say, husband; for I am afraid this countess-ship will be my daughter's undoing. But you must do as you please; make her a duchess or a princess; but it shall never be with my consent. The day that I see her a countess I shall reckon that I am laying her in her grave. But I say again, you must do as you like; for to this end are poor women born; they must obey their husbands if they are ever such blockheads." She then began to weep; but Sancho relaxed and did all he could to comfort her. He assured her that, although he must make his daughter a countess, he would put it off as long as possible.

Charles Lamb, as fine a critic of humor as ever wrote, is angry with Cervantes for the increased importance which he gives to Sancho in the second part. Cervantes no doubt was tempted by the popularity of Sancho to allow him larger scope and more varied opportunities of display as the work advanced. It is not improbable that Sancho was a favorite with Cervantes. Though Cervantes acted from either of these motives,

or from both, we see nothing to condemn him for. Others have done the same. Shakspeare, leaving kings and councillors to fate, keeps side by side with roguish Falstaff through three long dramas ; even in a fourth he refers to him with evident affection ; and, in humor touched with sadness, melting the comic into the tender and turning burlesque to a requiem, he tells the story of his death bed. Cervantes does not go thus far with Sancho ; but he does with his beloved knight. He stays with him until he hears his latest word. He permits Sancho to go to his home in corpulence and health, and he that chooses may complete his biography ; but of his gentle and renowned enthusiast none shall ever have to continue a half-told story. Sancho may be revived, often has been, often is, often will be ; but Quixote or Falstaff never has been, never can be, repeated ; they spoke immortal words once for all, then found an unapproachable and an everlasting rest. Cervantes then does not desert his hero — he does not give him to dishonor. Sancho, it is to be admitted, appears more prominently than he did before ; but, except in a few cases, he remains in subjection to his master. He intrudes oftener, but not with insolence. His freedom is not greater than it was at first ; and he submits to the least reproof. If he has become less silly and more witty, his improvement is due to his master ; and this debt he confesses with humble and with frequent acknowledgment. Indeed, as his intelligence improves, his admiration grows to reverence ; and, strangely enough, his delusion increases with his admiration and intelligence. If for a moment, in conversation with the duchess, he



derides his master's wits, the reply which he makes when the duchess taunts him with following a madman atones for the offence by its affection and loyalty, expressed in the eloquent simplicity of nature. "I cannot help," he says, "but follow him; follow him I must; we are both of the same town; I have eaten his bread; I love him, and he returns my love; he gave me his ass colts; and, above all, I am faithful; so that nothing can part us but the sexton's shovel. And if your highness does not choose to give me that government you promised, God made me without it; and perhaps it may be all the better for my conscience if I do not get it." Still he does not give it up; for afterwards, urging his fidelity as a claim for promotion, he says, "Case me in that same government, and you shall see wonders; for a good squire will make a good governor." Sancho would never admit that he could be ungrateful or untrue. "This, he insists, might be so with one born among the mallows; but not, he avers, with one like him, whose soul was covered four inches thick with the grease of an old Christian."

But that at which Lamb is especially indignant is the base treatment to which Cervantes subjects Don Quixote in the palace of the duke. "Illustrious romancer," he exclaims, "were the fine frenzies which possessed the brain of thy own Quixote a fit subject, as in the second part, to be exposed to the jeers of duennas and serving men? to be monstereed and shown up at the heartless banquets of great men? Was that pitiable infirmity which in thy first part misleads him *always from within* into half ludicrous but more than

half compassionate and admirable errors not infliction enough from Heaven, that men by studied artifices must desire to practice upon the humor, to inflame where they should soothe it? Why, Goneril would have blushed to practise upon the abdicated king at this rate, and the she wolf Regan not have endured to play the pranks upon his fled wits which thou hast made thy Quixote suffer in duchesses' halls and at the hands of that unworthy nobleman." Pathetic eloquence like this cannot but move us; if by nothing else, by the evidence it affords of the sensitive and loving nature of him who wrote it. Yet I cannot think that the author introduced his hero unfeelingly into these circumstances. It was not for want of pity, not even of reverence, for his hero that led the author, I conceive, to the choice of such a situation; but a moral purpose, which without it would not have been complete. He thus pictures, with melancholy force, the inward hardness that may be covered by outward pomp; he exhibits with tragical impressiveness the cruelty with which surfeited epicureanism may seek amusement in the simplicity of unsuspecting innocence and in the oddities of blameless misfortune. Justice demanded this situation. Cervantes had shown the barbarism of the unwashed; it was right for him to show also the barbarism of the dainty. He had placed his hero in wayside hostelries; he had exposed him to the lower rabble: he now lodged him in a sumptuous castle, and left him to the mercy of the higher rabble. Properly, the case is darkened with the latter; because there is more innate contempt, more power of contrivance, more means of mockery, and

more mind to use them. The excess in the balance of insult, and the whole sum of injury, stand against the titled. And this is according to truth; for, when those who have superior advantages use them unworthily, they are the basest of the base. Let such appear as elegant as they may, they are essentially vulgar. The vulgarity of rank is, therefore, the worst of all vulgarity. The vulgarity of the mob is rude only in thoughtlessness or cruel only in passion; and, when reflection comes and passion cools, it is often succeeded by the frankest repentance and by generous reparation. But the vulgarity which takes liberties on the ground of wealth or station is ingrained; it is unredeemed and unredeemable. Be the person who does this king or queen, duke or duchess, that person is vulgar. The elevated cannot sport with those below them without being vulgar; and, according to the distance to which their conventional training has removed them from the natural promptings of the social instincts, their vulgarity increases in repulsiveness. But if the sport in which they would make their fellow-men the instruments of their pleasure be painful or degrading, then they are more than vulgar; they are inhuman. But in this treatment of Don Quixote, perhaps, if we look deeply enough, we may discover some wounding memories, some latent experience, of Cervantes himself. If this were so, then I confess my sympathies are with the author more than with his hero. The Spanish nobility of that day did not presume a little on their rank; and towards men of letters, so far as we can learn from the cautious manner in which men of letters, as dependants, were obliged to speak, the Span-

ish nobility were equally sparing in social delicacy and in pecuniary generosity. Cervantes may have had to endure much of insolence from nobles who did not understand the grandeur which would outlive their titles. It is certain he had to bear neglect and poverty ; it is equally certain that he bore them cheerfully and that he bore them bravely. This hero man, before he had sent out his hero knight, had done high deeds ; and, except the unpurchasable satisfaction which such deeds themselves afford, he had gained but poor reward. He carried about with him marks of his contest with fortune and with men. He had lost an arm at Lepanto ; he had worn the yoke in Algiers ; he had conspired against his tyrants ; he had led his comrades to attempted flight. Enthusiasm sustained him in battle and captivity ; maimed and indigent, it sustained him still. He excited men to musing and to mirth ; he caused them to look at folly through the mingled tears of both ; and, as they looked, he taught them wisdom. After doing all thus he speaks, doubtless knowingly, in the person of his hero : “ O accursed poverty, why dost thou intrude upon gentlemen and delight in persecuting the well born in preference to all others ? Why dost thou force them to cobble their own shoes, and on the same threadbare garments wear buttons of every color ? Wretched is the poor gentleman, who, while he pampers honor, starves his body ; dining scurvily or fasting unseen with his door locked ; then out in the street he marches, making a hypocrite of his toothpick ! Wretched he, I say, whose honor is in a continual state of alarm ; who thinks that at the distance of a league every one discovers a patch upon his

shoe, the greasiness of his hat, the threadbareness of his cloak, and even the cravings of his stomach." Words that sound like these are evidently of more than fictitious import; words that sound like these conceal the sadness that is in the heart by the laugh that is on the lip. Nor can I help attributing a satirical meaning to the high favor in which Sancho stands with these wealthy entertainers. The sensualism of which he is the type is what the luxurious as well as the low the most enjoy, sometimes in a different form and sometimes in the same. Still, as ever, the luxurious are most attracted by arts that embody sensualism and that appeal to it.

And now that I am on the point of closing, I feel how much that might be said on this work I must leave unsaid. I have not been able even to allude to its episodes, many of them the choicest things in literature. I have given no illustration of its descriptions, so various and so splendid. I will offer no excuse for not particularizing its several characters; for that would be to pass in review individuals from every grade of life of a nation the most varied in its manners and population that then existed in the world. The excellence of spirit in this story is a subject for unqualified approval. Never has life been painted with a finer mixture of its lights and shadows; never has the gravity of its philosophy been relieved by so gracious a mirthfulness; never has its wisdom been less repelling or more affectionate. Pervaded by religion, without formality or exhortation, the tendency of it is to strengthen faith and reverence, to inspire Christian hope in every trial, and to urge Christian



obedience in every temptation. Withal, the whole is bathed in the very light of humor — humor the most perfect that any single work has ever exhibited. And this light is as warm as it is transparent — a light in which the murkiest soul casts off its clouds, in which the sunny temper grows yet brighter, in which the innocent heart may bask and rejoice with a gladness that leaves nothing to regret behind. It is humor of that perfect kind which makes no alliance with indecency, malice, or contempt — a humor in which we may safely laugh, and, when the laugh has ceased, not fear to pray.

I have not explored my subject ; I have scarcely approached it. I am not as the hardy climber, that works upward along the mountain, nor forbears until he has gained the summit ; I have rested upon the margin of its shadow. I am not as the strong diver, that plunges into deep waters and brings up treasures from the bottom ; I have lingered on the brink to muse. Like the African traveller who sounded rivers in the desert by casting in pebbles, watching for the circlets on the surface to tell him of the depth, I have only flung a few thoughts into the bosom of a mighty theme ; and although by doing so I discover that I cannot fathom it, I discover at the same time its profundity, its greatness. But yet something more I find also. Comparing the emotions that I have now with those which Don Quixote had once excited, I am made aware that years have been doing their work upon my mind. In youth we revel in the mirth of this story ; we laugh at the exploits of the knight ; we laugh at the misfortunes of the squire ; we have no reverence for the

chivalrous but bareboned imitation of Beltenebros; the famous recoverer of Mambrino's helmet; we extend no pity to the corpulent imbodiment of proverbs that rises beside him; we enjoy with all our hearts the capers which the merry lodgers of the inn compel him to perform in the air without aid of tight rope or slack rope; his flounderings are to us most exhilarating fun; and, in imagination, we ourselves take hold upon the blanket. But, when time has taught us more sober lessons, — when we learn that *we* too have dreamed, that *we* too have had our buffetings and blanketings, — we think differently. When we learn that we likewise have often put the shapings of fancy for the substance of truth, the coinage of the brain for the creation of reality, the vision in the wish for the fulfilment in the fact, laughter is changed into reflection and musing takes the place of gayety. There is hidden meaning in these wondrous imaginings of Cervantes; and experience, after many days, does not fail to show it. We have gleanings from them of life's purpose. We are here to do, and not to dream; we are here to endure as much as to enjoy; and, through doing and endurance, to grow — to grow in all that elevates the soul, in all that crowns it with genuine dignity, in all that clothes it at the same time with honor and humility, in all that renders it more gentle as it becomes more commanding. In the same manner we have gleamings of life's nature. Life is not all meditation; it is not all business; it is not all in the ideal; it is not all in the actual; and that life is best in which these several elements are best united. The ideal separate from the actual becomes mysticism

or extravagance ; the actual separate from the ideal degenerates into the sensual or into the sordid. It is in the proportioned combination of the ideal with the actual that life is highest ; it is in this proportioned combination that life presents the finest union of enthusiasm and reflection, the finest harmony of beauty and of power.

## THE SCARLET LETTER.

A ROMANCE, BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

No writer has this country produced that is more distinctive than Nathaniel Hawthorne. Familiar to us all is that quaintness of manner, which, at first simple as an old wife's talk, gradually beguiles us on until we are lost amidst the wildest scenes and the most ideal interests. In the *Twice-told Tales* and in the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, who has not felt the peculiar charm of that homely New England literalness which conceals beneath it fancies often as bold as Bunyan's and as exciting as those of Radcliffe? The present story develops all the peculiarities of the author's genius, but of his genius put forth with a strength beyond any former effort. It has the unmistakable stamp on it of the writer's mind; yet there is a sort of power in it which we did not expect, though it does not surprise us. It is the most decisive production of the author and one of the remarkable stories of the age.

The introduction is an opening that will detain the reader on the threshold of the feast. This part of the volume gives a new illustration to the old truism, that with genius no topic is exhausted. We had no idea

that the machinery of neglected documents could ever be used again without causing the reader to yawn at the beginning of a tale and deterring him from going farther. But, then, we always connected such documents with the library of an old castle or the concealments of an old church: it was new to us, indeed, to find that the materials of a romance could be secreted in a custom house. Not less new to us, and as delightful as new, the poetry and pathos with which, as with a halo and mist of fancy and emotion, he encircles that old custom house, enlivened with gleamings of humor that fitfully and mildly irradiate them. Thus we might characterize the whole of the preparatory matter. The following passage, in allusion to his official relations and companions, we venture to transcribe: —

“I doubt greatly — or rather, I do not doubt at all — whether any public functionary of the United States, either in the civil or military line, has ever had such a patriarchal body of veterans under his orders as myself. The whereabouts of the oldest inhabitant was at once settled when I looked at them. For upwards of twenty years before this epoch the independent position of the collector had kept the Salem Custom House out of the whirlpool of political vicissitude, which makes the tenure of office generally so fragile. A soldier, — New England’s most distinguished soldier, — he stood firmly on the pedestal of his gallant services; and, himself secure in the wise liberality of the successive administrations through which he had held office, he had been the safety of his subordinates in many an hour of danger and heartquake. General



Miller was radically conservative; a man over whose kindly nature habit had no slight influence; attaching himself strongly to familiar faces, and with difficulty moved to change, even when change might have brought unquestionable improvement. Thus, on taking charge of my department, I found few but aged men. They were ancient sea captains for the most part, who, after being tossed on every sea and standing up sturdily against life's tempestuous blast, had finally drifted into this quiet nook, where, with little to disturb them except the periodical terrors of a presidential election, they one and all acquired a new lease of existence. Though by no means less liable than their fellow-men to age and infirmity, they had evidently some talisman or other that kept death at bay. Two or three of their number, as I was assured, being gouty and rheumatic, or perhaps bedridden, never dreamed of making their appearance at the custom house during a large part of the year; but, after a torpid winter, would creep out into the warm sunshine of May or June, go lazily about what they termed duty, and, at their own leisure and convenience, betake themselves to bed again. I must plead guilty to the charge of abbreviating the official breath of more than one of these venerable servants of the republic. They were allowed, on my representation, to rest from their arduous labors, and soon afterwards — as if their sole principle of life had been zeal for their country's service, as I verily believe it was — withdrew to a better world. It is a pious consolation to me, that, through my interference, a sufficient space was allowed them for repentance of the evil and corrupt practices

into which, as a matter of course, every custom-house officer must be supposed to fall. Neither the front nor the back entrance of the custom house opens on the road to paradise.

“The greater part of my officers were whigs. It was well for their venerable brotherhood that the new surveyor was not a politician, and, though a faithful democrat in principle, neither received nor held his office with any reference to political services. Had it been otherwise, — had an active politician been put into his influential post to assume the easy task of making head against a whig collector whose infirmities withheld him from the personal administration of his office, — hardly a man of the old corps would have drawn the breath of official life within a month after the exterminating angel had come up the custom-house steps. According to the received code in such matters, it would have been nothing short of duty in a politician to bring every one of those white heads under the axe of the guillotine. It was plain enough to discern that the old fellows dreaded some such discourtesy at my hands. It pained and at the same time amused me to behold the terrors that attended my advent ; to see a furrowed cheek, weather beaten by half a century of storm, turn ashy pale at the glance of so harmless an individual as myself ; to detect, as one or another addressed me, the tremor of a voice which, in long-past days, had been wont to bellow through a speaking trumpet hoarsely enough to frighten Boreas himself to silence. They knew, these excellent old persons, that, by all established rule, — and, as regarded some of them, weighed by their own lack of

efficiency for business, — they ought to have given place to younger men more orthodox in politics and altogether fitter than themselves to serve our common uncle. I knew it, too, but could never quite find it in my heart to act upon the knowledge. Much and deservedly to my own discredit, therefore, and considerably to the detriment of my official conscience, they continued, during my incumbency, to creep about the wharves and loiter up and down the custom-house steps. They spent a good deal of time, also, asleep in their accustomed corners, with their chairs tilted back against the wall; awaking, however, once or twice in a forenoon to bore one another with the several thousandth repetition of old sea stories and mouldy jokes that had grown to be passwords and countersigns among them.

“The discovery was soon made, I imagine, that the new surveyor had no great harm in him. So, with lightsome hearts and the happy consciousness of being usefully employed, — in their own behalf at least, if not for our beloved country, — these good old gentlemen went through the various formalities of office. Sagaciously, under their spectacles, did they peep into the holds of vessels. Mighty was their fuss about little matters; and marvellous, sometimes, the obtuseness that allowed greater ones to slip between their fingers. Whenever such a mischance occurred, — when a wagon load of valuable merchandise had been smuggled ashore, at noonday perhaps and directly beneath their unsuspecting noses, — nothing could exceed the vigilance and alacrity with which they proceeded to lock, and double lock, and secure with tape and sealing wax

all the avenues of the delinquent vessel. Instead of a reprimand for their previous negligence, the case seemed rather to require a eulogium on their praiseworthy caution after the mischief had happened—a grateful recognition of the promptitude of their zeal the moment that there was no longer any remedy.”

The sketch of the Old Inspector is perfect; but we cannot extract it. To attempt to give an idea of it in other than the author's words would be presumption; and to curtail it would be to do it violence. No picture that we remember in Addison or Goldsmith excels it. Hawthorne was a custom-house officer that he might draw the Old Inspector; and glad, hearty laughter will the Inspector provoke when cabinets and their changes will be the lumber of old Time. The Old Inspector lived, it seems, a life in which the cares of office never spoiled his appetite, in which no sickly fancies or laborious thoughts disturbed digestion. Happy, however, though he was, according to the measure of his faculties and the activity of his functions, his course of life was not entirely untroubled. It had its painful incidents; but they were not many. “The chief tragic event of the old man's life, our historian tells us, was his mishap with a certain goose which lived and died some twenty or forty years ago; a goose of most promising figure, but which at table proved so inveterately tough that the carving knife would make no impression on its carcass, and it could only be divided with an axe and a handsaw.” In happy contrast to this is the sketch of General Miller, serious, appreciating, happily conceived, and written with an impressive and kindly eloquence.



The slight personal revealings which he gives of himself are not the least in the attractions of this introduction. We doubt not that all who sympathize with literature, and with its place in American culture and American fame, have feelings and opinions connected with the dismissal of Mr. Hawthorne with which party tendencies have no concern. Whatever may be our thought concerning the matter, we cannot regret the result, since humanity is the gainer, and the custom house no loser; for, though humanity might lose a poet in the custom house, there is not much danger that the custom house will lose many officers in poetry. Yet, as our author found the hint of his story in the custom house, we are thankful to those who put him in: as he could not use it while he remained there, we are benefited by those who turned him out.

It is a deep, dark, strange, and solemn story; deep, dark, strange, and solemn in its scene, narrative, characters—in the meanings which it conceals and in the moral which it implies. Though most distinctly told, there is yet a mystic and a mythic obscurity around it. It is well placed in an age of witchcraft—in an age when religious feeling allied itself with ferocious superstitions, and when the moral sense was a kind of internal savageism, ere the land was cleared of the Indian. When the settlements in New England were yet girded by dismal forests, and the minds of New England were ruled over by dismal doctrines, the events of this story are supposed to have occurred and its personages to have lived. A crowd is gathered round a prison door. Faces are anxious and expectant. The door opens,



and out from the jail there comes a woman in the bloom of youth and beauty. An infant, some three months old, clings alarmed to her neck. On her breast she wears, shaped from scarlet cloth and elegantly embroidered, the letter A. This woman is Hester Prynne, an immigrant in the colony of about two years. She is to stand in the pillory, and this scarlet letter is the initial of her sin and of her shame. She might have been punished with death according to the severe laws of the colony; but, as many mitigating circumstances plead in her behalf, she is to be exposed on the pillory and to wear this letter for life. Not impudently, yet firmly, she ascends; she stands upon the scaffold; she listens respectfully to the admonition of the clergy; she bears bravely the gaze of the crowd, and only once she shrinks. She sees, as she looks into that crowd, the pallid face of an elderly and deformed man. He is her husband: he had staid behind in Europe; and, thus exposed, she saw him in a strange land for the first time. The moment passed. There was yet another soul present, bound to the spirit of the woman by a stronger and a darker interest.

The woman here exposed is a sinner; but she has sinned after the manner of woman, and even in sin appears a whole woman in weakness and in strength. The meanness and degradation which man displays in his transgression is often in strange contrast with the firmness, even grandeur, which woman sometimes shows in hers. The deeper crimes of man come from his passions and his appetites; the most greivous sins of woman are frequently from her heart. Thus, while guilt in man is selfishness, guilt in woman may be

sacrifice. While it bears down man to cowardly degradation, it may display in woman some of her most heroic qualities. Even, as in this instance, with a love sincere, though unhappy and unblessed, she can still be faithful to the last and strong as a martyr. She will bear all tortures and all shames, and no power can wring out the secret which she has locked within her heart. In the faith which will endure disgrace, and endure it in a solitary silence, woman has ever proved her superiority to man. This attribute in the moral being of woman our author finely brings out in the whole character of Hester, but especially in her conduct on the pillory.

Among other magnates of the colony two clergymen are present. One is the grave and elderly Mr. Wilson — a man of much experience, quiet in his preaching and sober in his godliness. The other is Mr. Dimmesdale — young, handsome, and a man of genius ; a man distinguished, in general repute, for a piety to which good men grown hoary in the service of God did homage ; a man of matchless eloquence, uniting, as it seemed, a seraph's zeal to a prophet's speech. This is the man that is called on to exhort Hester to make confession as to who is the partner of her sin. The venerable Mr. Wilson has exhausted all his skill and failed. Regarding the persuasiveness of his younger colleague as not to be resisted, he urges the evidently unwilling priest to use this persuasiveness on the unyielding culprit. The youthful priest does pour out an impressive sermon : a sad sermon it is — a sermon sounding with the melancholy of despair. Sincere, it is yet ambiguous. Hester's ear might take

it, and not falsely, as an exhortation to speak out ; but her woman's heart would feel it truly as an appeal to hold her peace. Hester does hold her peace. We can here easily see that her exhorter is at her mercy and that he is the companion of her guilt. She steps down from the stage of her exposure, to wear upon her bosom the scarlet letter until it shall burn into her flesh and blood, through heart and soul, and scorch all her moral and her living womanhood.) But, since the muse of Æschylus made men stand aghast by pictures of awe and sorrow, was ever a more tragic group than we have here presented to the imagination? Here is the unconscious infant that shall never know a father ; here is the exposed mother, whose sin has all the pain of open shame for herself and the burden of concealment for another, without any remorse for the man she has deserted, without any support from the man she has loved. And here are these two men, not revealed to each other or to the people, yet confronted spirit to spirit, and, by a sort of occult instinct, present mind to mind — the one an unloved husband, the other his loved but wretched rival. What group more desolate was ever brought together?

This tragic power in the opening deepens in the progress of the story ; and passions, incidents, and persons are fraught with it to the end. We feel it in the oath of Hester to her husband, in that sad interview when she swears not to discover her relation to him ; we feel it in the anguish with which she beholds the malign influence that the wily and revengeful man exercises on the priest, in whom he knows he has found his rival, in whom he secures his victim ; we feel it in

that force of sorrow which, after years have fled, leads her to break up this companionship, and in the desperate efforts which she makes to arouse in her lover the courage and resolve of manhood. (There is a Grecian sublimity in the manner in which she meets and goes through her destiny. Year after year she lives solitary, yet not selfish; unsocial, but not inhuman; strong, but not ungentle. She works for her living, nurtures her child, and does besides aught she can of neighborly charity. She still wears the letter, but few attach the original significance to it; nay, so conciliating is patience, so powerful is the might of uncomplaining endurance, that this letter, from a symbol of infamy, comes at last to stand for loving and honorable meanings. The child grows apace, and is a thing of dreamful beauty, an infant witchery, a mixture of the human and the unearthly, an incarnate loveliness, which we know not how to name, whether to call it an imbodied angel from the skies, or an imbodied fairy from the woods. (The outcast woman wears her scarlet letter on her garment; the tortured priest bears his, burning in his breast. The fire that is never quenched consumes him; the worm that never dies devours him; and the enemy that cannot forgive looks on and glories in his sufferings. They have done their work. They have worn out his life. The scarlet letter has done its work. Hester, reckless of a society which had so bruised her, would now quit it and take the priest along with her. There is, in this portion of this deep prose tragedy, great eloquence and a most profound searching into human passion, with dashes of poetic sunshine, the brighter for the gloom.

The interview between Hester and Dimmesdale, after so many years of open shame on her side and so many of secret remorse on his, in the silent and secluded forest, is a scene of sorrow and joy and of inward human struggle, upon which we pondered in long reflection and with thoughtful admiration. It is a pregnant page out of the volume of humanity. Then, in contrast with these situations and persons so agitated with sad memories and excited passions, is the child at the brook, questioning its babble and giving the meaning of its own sweet fancies to the music of its ripple. But life must no more wrestle with remorse. The time has come for confession, and confession ends in death. While the minister temporarily meditates flight and has not yet resolved upon confession, — while his brain reels between desire and conviction, between earthly escape and spiritual martyrdom, — he is visited by a series of temptations — grotesque, strange, fascinating, illusive, terrible. Extraordinary as these are, every man has that in his experience which will convince him of their reality. 'This is a great piece of — psychological painting; and so too, with a dramatic grandeur in addition, is the close of the minister's life. The people and the fathers of the people are assembled. It is election day. The preacher has pronounced a sermon which the council and the multitude throb under as a voice from heaven. The priest is on the pinnacle of fame for sanctity and genius. Hester Prynne stands near the pillory on which seven years before she was exposed. Throngs have left the church; they are coming towards this scaffold. The preacher, pale and tottering, is among them. Here the minister



stops: with Hester and her child he ascends the scaffold in the presence of the bewildered, the astonished, assembly.

“‘People of New England,’ cried he, with a voice that rose over them, high, solemn and majestic, — yet had always a tremor through it, and sometimes a shriek, struggling up out of a fathomless depth of remorse and woe, — ‘ye that have loved me, ye that have deemed me holy, behold me here, the one sinner of the world! At last — at last — I stand upon the spot where, seven years since, I should have stood; here, with this woman, whose arm, more than the little strength wherewith I have crept hitherward, sustains me at this dreadful moment from grovelling down upon my face! Lo, the scarlet letter which Hester wears! Ye have all shuddered at it. Wherever her walk hath been — wherever, so miserably burdened, she may have hoped to find repose — it hath cast a lurid gleam of awe and horrible repugnance round about her. But there stood one in the midst of you at whose brand of sin and infamy ye have not shuddered.’

“It seemed at this point as if the minister must leave the remainder of his secret undisclosed. But he fought back the bodily weakness — and, still more, the faintness of heart — that was striving for the mastery with him. He threw off all assistance, and stepped passionately forward a pace before the woman and the child.

“‘It was on him!’ he continued, with a kind of fierceness, so determined was he to speak out the whole. ‘God’s eye beheld it! The angels were for-

ever pointing at it! The devil knew it well, and fretted it continually with the touch of his burning finger! But he hid it cunningly from men, and walked among you with the mien of a spirit, mournful because so pure in a sinful world — and sad, because he missed his heavenly kindred! Now, at the death hour, he stands up before you! He bids you look again at Hester's scarlet letter! He tells you, that, with all its mysterious horror, it is but the shadow of what he bears on his own breast; and that even this, his own red stigma, is no more than the type of what has seared his inmost heart! ' "

Then, in a last and wild "farewell," he expires.

The leading characters are conceived, contrasted, and evolved, not with artistic skill only, but with an inlooking soul that has gone far down to the deep places of the human affections and to the mysteries of the human will. The several individualities are admirably sustained. It would be no fair method of criticism to judge them as we would persons of like condition now; for, though they belong to what we esteem the order of common life, their era is so remote from ours — not indeed by years, but in idea — as to render them mythical; and, besides the dimness of tradition, there is the mystery about them of peculiar and solemn destinies. Their age is to ours in this country a sort of heroic age, and they are beings created to be distinctive even in their age. They are in the highest sense poetic beings, and to be estimated by poetic laws; yet by such laws we do not take them from the real by regarding them as of the ideal; for the ideal is the real, but separated from all that

renders the actual local, temporary, and changeful; in fact, consists of those elements of the real which are permanent and universal. These beings are consistent with themselves; and this is all that the rule by which they are to be estimated requires. In the world of art, in the world of imagination, they are complete and vital unities; and this is their proper world. Hester is ever the strong soul, still only with the strength of a soul that has sinned. Superior in her nature, she lives only in the force of nature, and ascends not into that sphere of spiritual being in which to yield is to conquer, to bend is to aspire, to become lowly is to become exalted. She is not a Christian, but a stoic. The outward cannot conquer her; but neither does she conquer the outward. She has not learned the divinity of Christian sorrow — the godliness of its source and the beauty of its manifestation. She is greater than her fellows; not, however, by heavenly, but human energy. She is too noble for revenge. She does them good; but it is not meekly done. She does them good, because good is the action of a grand spirit; and hers was a grand spirit. Though not evangelically benevolent, she could not be malevolent, vengeful, or malignant; for that were to be base. She earns good opinion without caring for it; and when she has worn out reproach she despises reconciliation. In taking her sin, and the odium, and the penalty of it on her own isolated, absolute individuality, we have an impressive example of mental and moral prowess. In bearing all the scorching and scathing shame of it on her own unsheltered bosom, without appeal, apology, excuse, or equivocation, we almost forget the crime in

the courage, and lose sight of the sinner in the heroine. She is not of those paltry creatures who will first have such enjoyment as sin affords and then expect to be petted for repenting — creatures who seem willing to put off their manhood, if they can evade retributive censure in the simulated incapacity of idiots or infants. But Hester was not of such. She would not charge her deed upon circumstance or others; and, odious as that scarlet letter was, she could not put it off, if, in doing so, she must put off with it the moral majesty of her individual personality.

Dimmesdale, too, whether considered as a psychological conception, or as an artistic creation, or as a moral agent, is a character in which we find evidence of a genius that seems to have elements in common with the apparently irreconcilable minds of Coleridge and of Crabbe. In one sense, it is a character not uncommon; but the author, in opening to us the inward workings of it and the spirit of these workings, evinces a searching and sagacious intellect, acting in company with an imagination that is as keen in its questionings of actual life as it is original in its forms of ideal life. Dimmesdale is not a hypocrite; for then it would be easy to paint him. He has committed sin, and conceals it. Still he is not false: he knows that he is not what he seems; yet he does not deceive. He has genius which he would use rightly; and yet he has not rectitude. He has power: he would not apply his power to evil ends; but still he is not a good man. He has fallen; yet he is not a hardened, nor by habit a bad, man. He loves fame, reputation, glory, influence; but he would give the universe for the one minute's courage

which would blast them all, strip him to the soul, and place him, a spiritual bankrupt and beggar, before the hooting multitude. That moment it costs him years of agony to gain and his life to go through. There is deep moral import for us in this character. It is one to tax profound attention, and it merits the profoundest. It will not do to call such a man a hypocrite. It will not even do to say that he wanted courage; for a man who had courage equal to the sacrifice which his trial demanded would not be a man who could be exposed to such a trial. Our remarks on character are often extremely inconsistent, and often we prove ourselves to be fools in our criticism of folly. There are instances when, by giving way to sudden passion, a man brings upon himself a measureless woe. Now, frequently, this is not so much the result of the deed itself as of the concealment of it and of the complications which belong to the concealment. Why, we ask, was not a frank and free confession made? Let us just think below the surface, and we shall discover that the coolness and the strength which would be equal to the confession would never be subject to the passion. There are actions which are morally contradictory, as there are terms which are logically contradictory; and the latter do not more necessarily exclude each other than do the former. Dimmesdale is one of those mixed characters, which, as they are the hardest to judge in life, are also the hardest to embody in literature. He is an example of those spiritual contrarieties which we should find in essence in the heart of every man that walks, could we see into it. In him, as poetry requires, they are intensified; in substance they are of the stuff



of common life ; it is only in degree that they are ideal and romantic. His being is a secret strife between — passion and principle ; between the power of conviction and feebleness of will ; between desire and devotion ; between the consciousness of being wrong and the longing to be right. With all this there is an interior centre of moral imposition. Vanity abides in that centre. He lives in excitement and for effect ; and the illusion which deceives the world is not greater than that which deceives himself.

Chillingworth is not a character that it is very pleasant to contemplate. He is, however, a character to excite thought and to afford instruction. His character, like the others, is depicted with a singular originality. But he is disagreeable. Still, we find a moral use in him ; and we do not see that, consistently with the plot or spirit of the story, he could well be other than he is. Yet, however real or natural the fact may be, it is painful to behold, as we do in Chillingworth, worthy qualities changed into wicked ones ; to behold an honest, intelligent, earnest, and reflective student transformed by any injury to a mean, insidious, vindictive persecutor, a simulating and smiling villain, a deliberate and fiendish assassin, who turns his mind into spiritual passion by which to consume and to kill his victim.

But, then, in what a wonder of contrast to this hateful and contemptible character is that of the enchanting little Pearl ! A true jewel she is, glistening and gleaming with sweet yet unsettled and uncertain lustre amidst all the darker fragments of the story ; a playful sprite, and yet sorrowful ; a cherub that seems to have

lost its pathway out of heaven and found itself on earth, smiling with the sweetness of higher spheres, yet sombre also with the melancholy of this lower world. Nothing, perhaps, has more tested genius than to give the ideal of childhood. We have now before our minds the Mignone of Goethe, the Fenella of Scott, the Little Nell of Dickens; but we think that Pearl takes hold of our last, almost strongest, affections by a wildness, a delicacy, an enchantment which none of them possess — which they certainly do not possess, as she does, in union with a weird, woodlike, sylvan witchery.

We have been thus full in our outline of the plot and in our analysis of the characters, not that we would have our essay a substitute for the story, for we suppose that all our readers are already familiar with this extraordinary volume: we have chosen our method as the only one by which we could naturally and easily indicate the impressions which have been left upon our mind by a tale so original and peculiar. Differences of opinion there will be on the tendencies of it, but none as to its genius. Some might consider the moral influence doubtful in a few instances; in others the purpose does not seem clear or well defined; but in substance, and on the whole, any work which reveals, as this does, the deep places of our nature, which so lays bare the subtle concealments of conscience, and which so brings out the tragic results of passion, must, in its very sadness, solemnize, instruct, and purify us.

We have not indulged in quotation; for in a story so thorough in its unity, so compact, and so condensed,

we found but few passages that we could, without injury, displace.

Our closing remarks must now be made. They must not be many, although there is no want of suggestiveness in our text. Genius, working by its freedom in a work of art, has no formal moral for its end. The moral should be in the spirit of purity and power with which it acts. When a spirit of purity and power is in the man, no badness or baseness can be in the artist. You may draw fifty or five thousand moral influences from his work; you may make fifty or five thousand moral uses of his work; your influences and your uses may be right; but not one of them may have been in *his* contemplation. He works within boundless nature; and, in conformity with nature, power goes out from him through his creation with an infinity of suggestiveness and in an infinity of ways. The author does in the present instance faintly indicate a moral in the single word — “*truth*.” But the real moral of his story covers the entire of life; any word which expressed a danger or duty of life would be but a part of the moral; the whole of it would require many words, significant of many dangers and many duties. But, as the author has chosen his word, we have no right to change it. We will only dwell on it in a few very general relations; as, for example, in the relation of society to the individual; in relation of the individual to society; and in relation of the individual to himself.

Now, in the relation of society to the individual, the treatment by the community of Hester was void of truth; it was false; it was bad. Rude society has

always the error of pushing ignominy to the utmost ; and we may doubt if any society is yet so instructed as to be entirely right and true in this matter. We would not destroy, nay, we would not weaken, the moral supervision of society ; we would not strip from it the solemn right to rebuke and punish. The retributive action of society on the individual is a part of nature ; it is an extension of the instinct of self-preservation into the wider instinct of social preservation. Nor is this action without its individual moral use. Society becomes a mirror to conscience ; and in that mirror a man often, for the first time, beholds the true moral image of himself. Let society punish, even to death, if *that* must be ; let society expose, if exposure is necessary ; but there is a bound which society has no claim to cross ; there is a *life* which no criminal can forfeit — the life of his inward being, the very vitality of his soul, the last recess of self-respect. To intrude on this is worse than murder ; for it is an attempt to kill that which is the life of life, the last retreat of hope, the last shelter in which consciousness can fold itself and bear existence even for an hour. Every man has this while he remains a man : let him wholly lose it, and in the same instant he flings off life. Jesus Christ, who knew all that is in man, knew how deeply, how divinely, this is in him, and he revered it. He would not even *look* at the woman brought to him for judgment, but turned away as if he would write upon the ground : and thus, while savage sanctimoniousness would brand with a scarlet stain, He whom no one could accuse would not wound by a glance. Even the secret and silent punishment

of God spares this thing in man; for, until remorse blackens to despair, it is that by which man ever finds in some part of his soul a drop of comfort. When society tries to corrupt this drop, or squeeze it out, then does society provoke man in his soul to hate it, to resist it as a tyrant, towards whom resistance is virtue.

Society may go beyond its just jurisdiction; but the individual reacts against the barbarism of society. When exposure has done all, it has done its worst; when nothing is concealed, there is no more to fear; and there can be but slight excitement to shame where there is no motive for gratitude. But when it is the individual that is false with society, he is feeble with himself. The sense of unfitness will perplex him; and, while any moral sensibility is alive, the sense of untruth will torment him. If a scarlet letter is to be worn, it is greatly better that it should be stitched upon the garment, ay, even branded on the forehead, than that it should burn ever in the heart. Every man is pledged to society in the way of general honesty; but some men are pledged additionally by the special relations of consecrated office. A judge may be tempted, and he is but human; so may a priest; but, until all sacred associations are taken from magistracy and priesthood, sin in judge or priest will ever appear darker than in other men. The argument will not hold which urges that duty is one; that it is the same in all men; that it belongs to humanity, and not to office. The mere acceptance or assumption of an office is an open vow, a deliberate engagement; and in the degree of the trust given in the office are the



expectations formed of the man. Satisfy these outwardly as a man may, while he is inwardly untrue he cannot be at peace, except his conscience die; then that would be intellectual as well as moral death. To a man with any innate nobleness no humiliation can be deeper, no shame more scalding, than to know that his life is not a reality, that his position is but phenomenal, and that, while mistaken for a prophet, he is only an actor. To have any secret which involves such feelings is a killing thing. It complicates the spirit; it confuses motive; it deprives a man of inherent force; because, in taking away his peace and his simplicity, it takes away his courage and his strength. However grand or energetic his efforts may be, they are but fitful and spasmodic; they have no continuous life; they are united to no fixed centre; below the most rapturous applause there are the stunning whisperings of fear, and in the brightest noon of fame the inward eye will shape to itself the accusing spectre of remorse. The distinction of what is natural in morality from what is conventional gives no relief; for, in all the permanent relations of society, the natural and the conventional merge into the law of TRUTH, and that is immutable and eternal. A man with any spiritual life in him only fears society because he has first condemned himself; and no censure from without can fatally disturb him if it has not interpretation from within. "*Thou art the man,*" says the lowly seer to the mighty king; it was the voice in the heart of the king which gave import to the voice of the prophet and gave it terror.

But though society can make no change nor even

conscience in aught that is dark, yet the best has need to watch and to be humble. We have all of us, potentially, the elements of every sin. That sin does not come into consciousness or commission may be a negation of trial, and not a triumph of virtue. Why should we not apply the great idea of our human identity, our human oneness, to guilt as well as to goodness? To feel that the situation of the direst criminal was possible to any of us, seems to us truly as needful to justice as to mercy — a sure bond of genuine charity. And what right have we to claim kindred with the saint and exclude the sinner? We are of common nature with them both; we are brothers in humanity; and we sanctify that humanity not less by pity towards the sinner than we do by aspiration towards the saint. But there is a class of sins of which society takes no cognizance, and of which a man is not quick to suspect himself. They are quiet sins; but they may become very deadly. They are sins of the spirit. They are not turbulent; but they cause often tempests of distress. Sins of the carnal passions become soon odious to society; but sins of the spirit — envy, vanity, bigotry, ambition — remain unrebuked, or are insensible to rebuke. The sins of the outward passions begin in the senses, and are in their last stage and worst when they reach the soul. The sins of the inward passions begin in the soul, and are direct and immediate evil in the source of life. But their agency does not stop within the soul; it goes far abroad; and, if allied with intellectual energy, it becomes as much more fearful for evil in the world as **THOUGHT** is greater than appetite. We would speak here, however, only on the evil

as it is in the individual himself. One such sin may work the most direful ruin in him; it may corrupt him in the essence of his soul; eat out of it every tolerant, every affectionate, disposition; it may so deceive his faculties, so pervert his sentiments, that he minds not the inward wickedness that is in him, or the perdition to which he has come, until in some late and revolting revelation he finds himself incurably miserable in hating and being hated. In the Chillingworth of this story we have this moral fact impressed on us. A man of thought, and not originally of unkindly temper, he allows a fatal provocation to overmaster him; he lets in the spirit of vengeance to his breast; helps its growth by brooding meditation; strengthens it, by exercise and habit, until victory brings him to despair; until all the man within him dies and nothing but the fiend is living. "From envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, good Lord deliver us!" Than this there is no more needful and no more solemn petition within the compass of human supplication.

## FICTION.

It would be a needless task in our day to prove that fiction may not in itself be wrong. An absolute condemnation of fiction would condemn every thing in which imaginative art has the least concern; not prose romance alone, but also poetry, painting, and sculpture. The most literal portrait has an element of fiction in it. Indeed, so far as fiction has an illusive power, it has it from its connection with actuality and truth. So far as fiction is symbolical and representative, it has accordance with the greatest portion of our experience. We live amidst phenomena and appearances, and the realities that lie behind them mock the most strenuous efforts of our reason. Truth lies in signs even to the most exact thinkers — by diagrams and formula they climb to the heights of heaven, and guide themselves through infinity amidst labyrinths of stars. Thus they penetrate the mysteries of nature; and thus, when they have found their meaning, they reveal it. And, when God himself would speak with man, it is by analogy and allegory that he opens such glimpses of eternal verity as the dim sight of humanity can bear. Not only are parables imaginative; the texture of religious speech, generally, must of necessity be so. If thought, at the

best, is but a sign; if life itself is the stuff which dreams are made of; if it be a dream rounded by a little sleep; if in it we see but as in a glass darkly, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; if, moreover, it is indeed as a tale, and quickly becomes a tale that is told, — men then act but on the simplest promptings when they copy it in phantasies which they shape for themselves, when they coin memories of their own experience, when they depict with exaggeration the sadness and the queerness that vary their existence, when here in the childhood of their being they take pleasure, as children do, in curiosity and wonder, in turning realities into stories and stories into realities.

But, like every other thing in the world, man can abuse this propensity, and does abuse it. First it is abused by numbers who write fiction. There are works, frequently of commanding genius, which enter profoundly into man and take a wide survey of the world, but it is ever in darkness and discontent; and in result they do nothing but to increase them. They assume a serious and philosophic form; some of them are written in a fascinating eloquence; they are intent with passion; and the general result on the mind, after perusal, is a union of intoxication with depression. But, eloquent and poetic as they are, their substance is that of exalted sensualism — associated as such sensualism ever is with a concentrative egotism. The main interest commonly turns on individual misery; and commonly this misery is a contradiction to individual desire. Desire is raised from the low station which the moral reason gives it to a dangerous aristocracy in which the sensual imagination rules. Na-



ture stands for law, inclination stands for virtue ; so that to draw out a scheme of life in conformity with such dictates would be to reverse the phraseology of the Decalogue. Our old novelists are in many things condemnable, and in nothing more than in their grossness. But they never tampered with the radical convictions upon which individual and social morals rest. In general they were careless persons—men of the world, and men who aimed only to give the world as they saw it. They drew characters as they were ; they used them because they were suitable to amuse the reader, to advance the action of the story ; and giving no promise for their integrity, offering no bail for their good behavior, they dismissed them to their fate, to make their way in the community as well as they were able. They were no reasoners, no speculators ; and, where one of them composed a narrative that enchained the attention of his readers, he achieved all that he proposed.

Another class of fictions is entirely of modern growth. These fictions literally riot in debasement, in moral and physical corruption. Will it be said that vices in romance do not within any measurable degrees come near to vices in reality ? But this is no true reason for reproducing them in art. Further, it may be said that, as vices and sufferings are in life and nature, it is serving the cause of humanity to show them forth in literature. I would have nothing excluded from literature ; the most tragic, the most comic, elements should abound in it ; but they should be duly mingled. Neither would I have any condition of social grade excluded ; nor, indeed, is any ever excluded by novel-

ists of the highest order. Genius in the finest writers of fiction has crowded its world from the humbler walks of existence. Who are those with whom Cervantes is most at home? Goatherds, peasants, barbers, innkeepers, carriers. Whom does Goldsmith bring before us? The inmates of a country parsonage, rustics, and the rabble of a jail. Scott I need not mention; for to enumerate the characters of his romances would be to survey the whole scope of civilization. In such works we may learn of humanity from a most wonderful wisdom; but to seek for knowledge in some modern stories that profess to reveal the mysteries of sin and sorrow would be as vain a task as to go to asylums of insanity for specimens of prudence, or to jails for examples of honesty — as vain a task as to study finance in the tale of Aladdin, or to learn geography in Gulliver's Travels. Let me mention two writers, not in English, who show how lowly personages may be combined with transparent purity of sentiment, with the utmost prodigality of imagination. One of these is the Italian, Manzoni. His *Betrothed* is a narrative of humble life, and is filled with the brightest riches of the heart. It has variety of character and incident, without bustle or confusion; it throbs with emotion, but avoids extravagance; it pictures domestic sorrows of the most afflicting kind and public calamities the most terrific; but in both it "oversteps not the modesty of nature," and never violates simplicity or truth. It depicts fondness and tenderness without being mawkish; it shows the ghastly vision of a plague without being disgusting; and to the minuteness of Defoe it unites the imagina-

tion of Boccaccio. The incidents are not only beautiful, but probable. Nearly all of them might have occurred in an ordinary life. The characters are consistent both in outline and detail. Peasants speak and act as peasants; barons speak and act as barons. The spirit of the story is as profound as it is spotless. It breathes a religious eloquence which has nothing that surpasses it, and, except in Fenelon, nothing that equals it.

The other to whom I have referred is the German, Richter. If we had not a preëminent example in the overflowing comiery of Don Quixote to prove that the quaintest humor, the slyest drollery, the most grotesque extravagance may consist with the most unsullied thoughts, we might point to the stories of Richter. These stories of Richter are mostly domestic. Their especial charm lies in sentiment. This is rich to large abundance; joining the familiar to the curious, the simple to the wild; the odd rising to the sublime, the sublime merging in the odd; the queer going hand in hand with the beautiful; the beautiful gyrating through mazes of eccentricity; the comic in the midst of miseries; misery girding the comic with a sombre boundary; painful struggles tinted with smiles; moments of joy snatched from depths of wretchedness; battlements of calamity lit up with beamings of glory from the soul; agony choking down its pain and giving place to bursts of childlike laughter; common events exalted to the grandest poetry or made suggestive of profoundest reflection; illustrations gathered from every art, every science, every department of scholarship, every region of the universe; the whole of such strange compound finding unity, identity, and life in

an unbroken inspiration of humanity and heaven. It would take a Rabelais, a Sterne, a Mackenzie, a Richardson, a Shelley, all melted into a single incarnation, to form a genius resembling that of Richter; and yet all of them together could not give us Jean Paul in the sweep of his fancy, the fulness of his love, and the depth of his power.

This desire for fiction is again abused on the part of readers. It is abused by excess. It is not the loss of time that it occasions; it is the false and the undue excitement which it indulges that is the most to be deplored. The world of dreams in which it constantly somnambulizes brings it, in two ways, into conflict with the world of duties. First, it is a conflict with hard requirement, in which enthusiasm has to buffet with literal obligation. Second, it is a conflict of extraordinary emotion against the regularity of settled laws. This collision between fact and fancy does, of necessity, sear the temper; it irritates the spirit; it causes the sphere of positive demands to assume an appearance melancholy, monotonous, and penal. We lose, then, the best enjoyment which fiction itself can give by divesting its perusal of novelty and by reducing it to a habit. We miss, too, the joys which are most worthy of rational existence — the joy which comes out from the exercise of our best powers; the joy of earnest purpose; the joy of independent meditation; the joy of grappling athletically with the various problems that are involved with all our relations to the universe; the joy, in fact, of feeling that we labor and that we live. Readers likewise abuse fiction when they go to it for positive knowledge; for, even if it could dispense

with labor in instruction, if it could fully communicate philosophy without taxing thought, it would do it all to our disadvantage. The method, the discipline, the patience, the struggle of our faculties, the progress of research, enlarged discernment, enlarged tolerance, the formation of reflective habits, the growth of moral wisdom, — these are more important, far, than any amount of mere intellectual acquisition. It is not merely the fable of the husbandman's legacy to his sons realized: it is better; for, while we enrich the soil by cultivation, we also find the treasure.

I say nothing of kinds of fiction that ought neither to be written nor read. I refer to mental results more than to moral ones; to the danger of injury to truth and simplicity of feeling more than harm to its purity; to the disorder of intellectual health rather than the dislocation of the spiritual principles. The moral and the spiritual are, I grant, more important than the intellectual; but this is so readily apprehended that there is no need to dwell upon it. Besides, I have in these remarks concern only with an excess in degree, and not an evil in essence. Constant indulgence in fiction weakens both mind and motive; it incapacitates the one for thought and the other for action; it surrounds the life of its victim with an atmosphere of unreality, and it puts within it a fountain of uneasy desire. Thence arises a general discontent; not that sort of discontent with things as they are, which, urging us to make them better, is an essential of improvement, but that vain discontent with things inevitable which flies for relief to a vague idealism that only deepens the malady. Useful and



sober studies are not simply neglected ; they are loathed. The excessive novel reading, besides taking from us a relish for simple pleasures, a keen, clear discernment of human beings and human circumstances as they are in the world which God has made and which his wisdom rules, takes from us the inclination to commune with outward nature — deprives us of the power to appreciate it. With heated blood and dizzy brain, worn from loss of sleep and depressed from long excitement, outward objects yield none of their true influences to our perverted feelings and our disordered senses. We get so habituated to the landscapes of romances that in these only we luxuriate ; and we turn from the actual creation to rejoice in a fanciful one. We wait till the shutters are closed to find a summer's dawn blushing beautifully on paper ; and half asleep near a smoking lamp at midnight we have in the same way a resplendent sunset on the mountains. This is not alone to take creation and humanity at second hand ; it is to exist in a medium which is artificial as well as visionary ; to quit the fair earth and the open sky for overheated pictures ; to look at character, not in spontaneous movement, but in curious contrivance ; to study social manners, not by direct observation, but in exaggerated description ; it is, in fact, to exclude from the mind original impressions, and to cram it in their stead with the vagaries of imagination.

Much more might be said ; but space permits not. Having thus regarded fiction on the side of its evils, we are now to regard it on the side of its uses. But from this point of view I shall generally have before my mind fiction the purest and the highest. The

utility of fiction does not consist in tangible benefit ; it is coincident with the inspiration which any work contains and communicates. A great story teller acts on many faculties ; and, therefore, within himself he combines a vast capacity of agencies. Equally analytic as creative, not dependent on the instinct of genius alone, but matured by reflective thought, and rich in knowledge with the spoils of time, he is painter, architect, dramatist, critic, satirist, geographer, naturalist, antiquary, historian, politician, metaphysician, and moralist — not in technical systems and disquisitions, but in the concrete vitality of human action and of human character. The utility of fiction is, therefore, to be traced in the wholeness of its power. The advantage derived from the highest kind of fiction is analogous to the advantage derived from the highest kind of drama. Neither aims to put the mind in a specific attitude, neither to urge it in a specific direction ; but both tend to enlarge, to soothe, to humanize it. When we study *Lear* or *Macbeth*, no distinctive intellectual or moral purpose is obtruded on us ; but compass, and force, and insight are given to our intellectual and moral being. In like manner, the benefit received from the perusal of *Ivanhoe* or *Old Mortality* is in the order and degree of inspiration which they contain or can communicate. The higher fiction, like the higher drama, acts through emotion and imagination — sometimes one, sometimes the other ; but most completely when both combine and form a unity. Give this *unity* a name, and it is what we call sympathy — one is imperfect without the other. Emotion

without imagination is narrow and timid sensibility. Imagination without emotion is cold, brilliant, and constructive. Emotion at the best will give us only sentiment — imagination will give us only wit or incident; bring them together, and we have pathos and humor, drollery and tragedy, character and story. Passive sympathy in the reader corresponds with active sympathy in the author; the active sympathy of the author comes forth in living realities; passive sympathy in the reader enters into and understands them.

Fiction here presents itself to us as an agency in one very elevated order of culture — culture through sympathy. This kind of culture has occasionally an excellent intellectual use. Some of the most obscure workings of the mind have been best revealed in the imbodied life of romance, and, by means of incident and feeling, made actual before us in the vivid personality of deed and passion. Abstract problems are thus *incarnated* into forms of character; and, though the problems may not be solved, they are at least rendered more intelligible. What arrangement of mere logical method, what refinement of analysis, could, for instance, as the story of Caleb Williams does, so lay bare to us the structure of a peculiar mind, or so trace the influence of peculiar circumstances? What inferences from analogy, reasoned out in hard philosophy, could make us feel the misery of surviving all with whom our life was first associated as it is impressed on us in the dreary loneliness of St. Leon? With what terrible reality we behold the perdition, which mere intelligence must endure without human

kindred and social affinities, in the wild, the most eloquent, story of Frankenstein ! And where have metaphysics ever sounded such depths in the abysses of dark thought as have been explored in the dramatic romance of the Faust ? Such works do not alone interest us in the mysteries of our nature, but they also charm us with the richest variety of event and eloquence.

I will not say that romance can teach history, neither will I enter into the discussion as to whether historical studies have been improved or injured by the historical novel ; but certainly through this medium millions of men and women have obtained living images of past ages which they would not have sought or found in other writings. Romance cannot teach history, nor should it be taken even as historical interpretation ; and yet it can help us to understand history. We understand history as we understand man. It is as we can grasp the everlasting realities of his nature that we can comprehend him, into whatever shape the mould of custom or of time may cast him. Outward changes of eras and of empires can be recorded in chronicles ; it is sympathy alone that reaches down to the spirit of that eternal humanity which underlies them. Fiction does much to excite and to enlarge this sympathy. An age lives to us again ; and they who were buried in it as in a grave come forth at the wizard's invocation, giving us, not the story, but the very being of their day. The past is made the present. It is around us ; and the world which once it owned ceases to be overthrown with fragments of its sepulchres. It rejoices and is glad to be with its

myriads in the sun again, to revisit the glimpses of the moon, to smell the air in which ere now it lived, to tread upon the earth which aforetime it had ruled. We, too, rejoice and are glad to look upon its living face and to listen to its living voice. Thus, by the enchanter's power, the select of generations become our well-known acquaintances, our familiar friends; their names are household words; and great eras and mighty times seem but a portion of our own autobiography. The distant is made near. With the red man or the dark we communicate as with our neighbor; summoned from every corner of the earth, clad in every costume. Members of our race throng around our fireside, tell us their strange stories of their hearts, and lay before us the working of their thoughts. Man of the distant and the past, brought thus present to us, brought thus near to us, we recognize at once to be our brother, and as such we clasp him; we see the movements of his features; we feel the throbbing of his bosom; we are brought within the play of his passions; we are glad or sorry, angry or pitiful, in the varyings of his condition; he is our friend or enemy, our sovereign or slave; we have shame in him or pride; we blush for him or claim praise; we weep in his afflictions, we burn against his sins; he is no longer a shadow with a name; he is a substance with a soul.

Such culture must have much of moral usefulness. It does not stop in making us acquainted with an abstract humanity, but enriches those generous charities and affections that bind us to individual men. All those novels, therefore, which deal in personal scandal



and polemical dispute are as abominable to ethics as they are to art. Fiction which is alive with the spirit of true genius, out of its own fulness pours an abundant love. Near and afar off humanity is dear to it, and nothing so execrable to it as anti-social or misanthropic feelings. To bring the mind not only into nearer, but into kindlier, contact with humanity is the best office of genius. Shakspeare's creations, above all, have this influence. They have this influence in their comic power; but, with a deeper force, they have it ever in their tragic workings. Trace the poet through his most awful wanderings, through the subtleties of temptation, the cunning of desire, the sophistries of delusion, the gradations of passion, the crooked ways of envy, the steep ones of ambition, the patience of revenge, the pangs of jealousy, the moodiness of despair, the agony of remorse,—trace him through the doubts of reason, the hesitancy of conscience, to the mysteries and conjectures which lie along the bourn whence no traveller returns,—we feel more powerfully as we advance the sense of our humanity; by the great capacities which he stirs within us, we feel kindred with the highest; by those low monitions of conscience which warn us that the blackest guilt he paints might have been our own, we feel brotherhood with the worst. Art for its own sake must present humanity to us complacently; and genius, of its own free will, does what art requires. Observe the magic with which genius weds goodness even to weakness or insanity. Who is not made gentle by the zeal of Dr. Primrose for Monogamy, the ardor of Captain Shandy in recounting

the siege of Namur, and the devotion of old Monk-barns to antiquarianism? Who is not warmed with friendliness to his nature as he listens to the valiant and most gentle knight, Don Quixote, rejoicing in his prowess only that he may defend the weak, desiring to exalt himself that he may confer benefits on his friends, and especially his poor Sancho Panza? We share the cordiality of Sancho when he exclaims, "Lord bless thee for a master!" "Who would believe that one who can say so many good things should tell such nonsense and riddles about Montesino's Cave?"

But fiction as a mere enjoyment, within its proper limits, has important usefulness. It is often desirable, and for our good, to be taken from ourselves, to be delivered for a while from our cares, to live amidst scenery and passions more enchanting and absorbing than any which experience or the actual world gives us. It is not only allowable, but beneficial, occasionally to lay aside toil of the head as well as of the hand, and to seek for change, if not for relaxation, in the excitement of the feelings and imagination; to pass from the sphere of the workday realities which have fatigued or vexed us to find relief in the wide domains of the ideal. There are times, too, when we are utterly disqualified for labor either active or sedentary. There are states both of body and of spirit that go before illness, or that illness leaves, in which we are void of power and even of will. The beguiling of attention from our infirmities in these circumstances; the replacing of a painful consciousness by a pleasurable one; the filling up of time which would otherwise be vacant or distressing with

delightful interests, is more than a present solace ; it is curative ; it tempers sickness and accelerates the return of health. Fiction becomes then a physician and a friend.

In its due relations and degrees fiction has some peculiar advantages as an amusement. It is intellectual. It acts upon the mind, and, within the mind's own region, provides enjoyment. It is artistical. It is artistical to the reader as well as to the writer, so that fiction affords critical excitement as well as emotional delight. When in the perusal of a story we have revelled in pleasure that we did not care to analyze, which we could not wait to examine, our satisfaction is not less at the end, when memory and reflection enter on the task of reproduction. It is indeed a new and added pleasure when judgment traces the admirable skill which was exercised to produce effects so illusive and impressive, effects that were first a spell upon our fancy, and then a problem to our reason. Other artists the unprofessional can know in their effects alone. Their methods and contrivances the uninstructed cannot know ; and how means in them are related to ends the uninstructed have no capacity to judge. But, in fiction, every man has the witness in himself ; he is at once the instrument upon which the master plays and a critic of the player. Music is, of all arts, the most intense in its effects ; but the principles which guide the composer, and the manner in which he applies them, are almost as remote from the common mind as the mysteries of creation. Fiction, also, is accessible to the mass of mankind. It is, no doubt, a most exalted pleasure to look upon a

noble piece of sculpture. The most rugged casts of the Elgin marbles fill the mind with gratified astonishment; nearer to life and less sublime is the joy derived from painting; and even in a common print the Last Supper shines forth divinely in the light of religion and beauty. More absorbing than any and than all is music; and he who has heard its highest strains has memories to last for life. Still, these arts in their full excellence have many limitations; they are not capable of a boundless diffusion in their individual results. The statue must stay fixed on its pedestal; the picture must remain in its gallery; and music, for its finest performance, demands talent which is rare, and which, like all rare things, is expensive. Fiction you can have always and you can have it every where. You need no mediator between it and your own mind. It is not shut out from the eye; you have but to open the volume and its meaning is revealed; it is not dead or silent to the ear, waiting the enchanter to come and call it into life and power; the witchery is at your own command, and the spirits that you would have pass before you are ready at your own invocation. You can lose yourself in its delectations in your chamber or chimney corner, in the midst of solitude or the midst of men, in the garden bower or the forest nook, in the thronged hotel or in the crowded steamboat; and, without other medium than the printed page, the author's mind and your own are in full communion. I have said nothing on the universe of idealism into which fiction transports the mind—a universe that fiction has called into being, and which will hold its being while the actual fails to satisfy and

while fancy tires of experience. There is no knight that ever strode a horse more fixed in thought than he that managed Rosinante ; and there is no bailie that enters the town council of Glasgow more distinctly visible to his fellows than is Bailie Nichol Jarvie to the fancy ; and these are but two inhabitants of those immortal and unfading regions which constitute the charmed realms of romance.

“ Blessings,” says Sancho, “ on the man that first invented sleep—it comes round one like a cloak, and covers him all over.” Blessings, I say, on the man that invented fiction. It is a cloak that shuts out many a blast of trouble and annoyance ; and when a man wraps it well about him on a winter’s night, provided conscience and the household are at peace, he minds the storm as little as jolly Tam O’Shanter. Blessings on all genuine story tellers. Blessings on all singers too. Blessings on old Homer, that sang of Troy divine, leaving a beginning and a model for all who should sing forever. Blessings on the brave old scalds who chanted praises to the storm gods ; who, in high, impassioned measure, celebrated the warriors of the mountains and the monarchs of the sea. Blessings on bard, minstrel, troubadour, who gave refinement to courage and grace to might ; who, in chieftain’s hall and lady’s bower, tempered with humanity the force of manhood and softened with gentleness the pride of beauty. Blessings on the sweet, bold ballad singers, prophets of the people’s heart, poets of their fancy, lyrists of the wild and free, of baron and of boor, of woodcraft and knighthood, inmates of hut and palace, comical and sad in every mood of nature.



But once more I say, Blessings on the story tellers. Blessings on those of the legend-filled and wonder-trodden East, greater themselves than the magicians whom they celebrated, richer and more potent than the sovereigns of the genii — glorious necromancers, nameless, invisible, whose conjurings are an everlasting childhood, in which humanity has without decay the choicest, the brightest, imaginings of its youth. Blessings on those wild romancers, mighty alike in their fancies and their faith, who gave the tales of chivalry to men as believing as themselves; who surrounded the names of their heroes with associations of bravery and adventure that were not unfruitful in generous influences on character and life. Blessings manifold upon Cervantes that he sent out among men throughout all time, under grotesque appearance, two of the most lovable emanations that ever came forth at the call of genius, that ever swelled the heart with admiration, that ever shook the sides with laughter — the one the impersonation of wild enthusiasm, the other of happiest mirth. Long live Don Quixote; long live Sancho. If they have beaten all other knights and squires from the world, it is because they contain within themselves the best qualities of all other knights and squires put together. Blessings on those in our own literature who have not only enlarged the domain of the ideal, but introduced to its community some of its worthiest members; who have adorned it with such citizens as Christian the pilgrim and Crusoe the adventurer; with Dr. Primrose, Parson Adams, Uncle Toby, and a multitude besides. Blessings on those in our own day who call new inhabitants

into this empire with whom it is pleasant as well as profitable to be acquainted, who, while they minister to innocent gayety, improve the heart.

In conclusion, I mention the name which crowns the whole — that of Walter Scott. Epic, scald, minstrel, ballad singer, — he was all in one ; and yet, besides, he was the greatest of story tellers. In the range of his subjects he seemed bound to no locality, limited to no special time, intimate with the various grades, and conditions, and manners of mankind. It was as if the soul of the Wandering Jew, pardoned and baptized with genius, had transmigrated into a new body, commissioned to write stories of the many ages and the climes in which it had ever lived. It was as if, carrying the wisdom of its miraculous experience into its regenerated youth, it threw over the past the freshness of its new morning, as if it put forth the fire of rekindled blood into its older thoughts, then fainted into heaven, while men were yet spellbound to these records in joyful wonder and in passionate delight. This comparison, however, holds good for Scott but in one relation — the range and variety of the world which he painted. In nought but this was there any thing in him of the wizard. Familiar as his genius was with the core of olden times, no man was more cordially of his own. He was friendly with his age ; he was friendly with his neighbors. We can come near to his private habits ; and we delight to know the man in the distinctiveness of his personality to whom we owe so much. Many, and marvellous, and odd, and joyous, and deep, and beautiful are the characters with which he has surrounded himself ; but he is not lost among

them ; and, exhilarating as the pleasure is that such a goodly company bestows, we see it in a warmer lustre when we see it in the beamings of its master's face. Brave, kindly, homebred, and hearty, he does not repel our affections. We take pride in the greatness of one so near to us ; and we delight to observe that one who could so easily call multitudes from the vasty deep of his most plastic mind loved to be in genial intercourse with flesh-and-blood companions. And our intimacy with Scott is, if possible, rendered closer by the single weakness which he paid for by years of sorrow and with his life. He built a castle ; but he broke his heart. Even family he has left none. But he has left that which nothing can take from him except that which sweeps letters from the earth — a fame which lives in all that is lovable — a fame which gathers its applause from the grateful friendship of civilized generations. The consolation that he has ministered to desponding spirits ; the cheerfulness with which he has banished care ; the mirth with which he has laughed away sadness ; the tragic grandeur by which he has drowned individual sorrow ; the stirring events by which he has shaken the torpor of indolence ; the gentle, the gay, the heroic, the humane emotions with which he has agitated so many souls, — these are things which are deathless and which are priceless. There is no standard of exchange by which the gifts of genius can be balanced with the goods of earth ; and though such goods should attend on genius in every variety that men desire, they could never be taken for its wages or its equivalent. No temporal station could have added to Scott's dignity ; and all

factitious contrivances for posthumous importance, if perfectly successful, would have been nullified by the compass of his true immortality. His name is to us above the proudest of the Pharaohs ; and we would not give the least of his romances for the greatest of the Pyramids.

## PUBLIC OPINION.

IN a mere cursory essay, no complete disquisition, of course, can be attempted of so vast a subject; and this presumes to be no complete disquisition, but merely the attempt of a single mind to give its own impressions in its own way. I shall first discuss the general subject, and then some of its relations to the age in which we are living.

Opinion is one of those words which all persons understand, but which it is difficult to define. It does not imply a state of mind amounting to absolute conviction; and the proposition which merely declares our opinion is never considered as undisputed or indisputable. An assertion which excludes doubt or the possibility of doubt, whatever order or kind of affirmation it may belong to, cannot be classed as an opinion. But opinion seldom stands for a mere abstract statement; it is generally associated with some strong feeling; thence the tenacity with which men hold their opinions, the passions with which they urge them, and the fury with which they combat for them; thence it is that they combine so much intensity with variable-ness and so much tyranny with evanescence: the feeling and the opinion depend mutually one upon the other, and one without the other is nothing. A refuted



opinion is death to the feeling ; a worn out feeling is death to the opinion. Most of human contests have their origin in opinions, not in convictions ; most of the hatred, the malice, and all uncharitableness that disturb society is about opinions, not about principles.

Public opinion is not always in the right, and its power is no just measure of its rectitude. I will dwell for a little on this point ; and to avoid all that might possibly seem to be invidious, and likewise as more suited to the spirit of deliberate discussion, my illustrations shall be drawn from the past, and not from the topics of our own day.

Public opinion is not an infallible test of truth or right, even when it has combined in its favor *all* the circumstances that usually act with greatest force upon the popular judgment. The prevalence at various periods of wrong, absurdity, falsehood, and cruelty, it would be sufficient for our purpose simply to indicate ; but we will bring forward an instance which concentrates the whole principle within a single case, which presents to our view the public judgment in a most perverted condition, while all that gives not only the most awful strength, but the most venerable sanction, to opinion is on the side of that perversion. For what, let me ask, are the circumstances that give the greatest power as well as the most venerable sanction to opinion ? The authority of *numbers*, the authority of *great names*, the authority of *timè*. Take the case, then, of witchcraft. It was once fully sustained by this threefold authority ; and yet now men would laugh to scorn a pretension to it ; and that for which they once made the

heavens red with human flames and the air groan with human agonies, if asserted now, they would not deem as worthy a contradiction. There is something in this case so peculiar as to entitle it to more than passing mention. Let us for a while consider it. Popular excitement against witchcraft is of no remote occurrence. Late in the seventeenth century it raged in New England; and so recently as the middle of the eighteenth century a witch was hanged in Scotland. Now, this was generally a period of remarkable mental activity. Leibnitz, and Locke, Newton, Berkley, and Barrow lived within this period. It was a period which, in Protestant Europe, had not only shaken off the traditions of the middle ages, but was in strong antagonism against them. It was a period in which things were not the more firmly held, but the more readily discarded, the more they had been esteemed as sacred; a period in which numbers of minds were busy with inquiry, in which many were even zealous in scepticism. Bayle, Hume, Voltaire, and Rousseau lived within this period. It was in the most Protestant places of this most Protestant era that a movement sprang up against witchcraft which was fierce almost to insanity. New England and Scotland have long boasted the most intelligent masses in the world; and this not alone from excellent provision for popular education, but from native sagacity of understanding. The people of both countries are remarkable for their shrewd and thoughtful habits, for their grave and logical intellects. The people of both countries are acute and metaphysical; much given to examination; much disposed to analyze; little liable to be deceived by the illusions

of superstition or led away by the vagaries of imagination. The people of both countries are a sober and a careful people; prudent and skilful in their affairs; industrious in their earthly concerns, and not addicted overmuch to spiritual hallucinations; not indifferent to the things of the future life; but not entirely negligent about the things of the present life. Yet these keen, active, reflective, calculating people could hang and burn unfortunate old women who, unhappily for themselves, had left far behind them the fascinating sorcery of youth and beauty, and replaced it by the haggard necromancy of age and decrepitude. At twenty their spells were the brilliant eye and rosy cheek, for which they had flattery and submission; at eighty they had gray hairs, seamed faces, wore spectacles, hobbled on crutches, and possibly in some instances were not blessed with the mildest tempers: herein was the evidence of their offence, and for their offence they were roasted or strangled. There were thousands who could believe that creatures who evinced all mental imbecility were leagued with potent spirits; that creatures who were themselves loaded with infirmities had command of all diseases and power of all cures; that creatures who were dying for a meal could invoke famine or avert it; that creatures who could only limp to the whipping post could ride upon the whirlwind and direct the storm; that creatures who could not hide from a constable were leagued with invisible principalities. And for this witchcraft, which did not feed, or clothe, or lodge, or cure its votaries, — for this, the raggedest and the scurviest of occupations, detested here and damned hereafter, — for this sorry, profitless thing

there were thousands who could believe their fellow-creatures had bartered their immortal souls ; shrewd, sagacious inhabitants of New England and of Scotland could place faith in the existence of such a foolish compact—a faith that utterly astounds us when we consider that New Englanders and Scots might challenge the whole of Christendom at a bargain, and be sure to come off the victors. The puzzle is, to think how they could ever for an instant suppose that even Satan himself, with all his cunning and all his wiles, could pawn such a miserable imposition upon the most silly of their fellow-citizens. The wonder would indeed be unexplainable if we did not know that there is nothing so irrational which masses of men will not credit if it falls in with their prejudices ; that there is nothing so cruel which they will not inflict if their passions gain ascendancy. When once the popular mind is thus aroused it will not be questioned or counselled ; it will not be checked or reprovèd ; it takes no account of reflection, or wisdom, or prudence, or justice, or pity ; it acknowledges no authority either human or divine ; the gentle become furious and the bad become monsters. The record of sacred truth says, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil ;” the record of human experience says, also, Thou shalt not follow a multitude *hastily* to do any thing.

Nor shall we infer that the multitude are right because great men are among them. Great men are not more than others secured against the errors or passions of their times. They as well as the people are children of the age. The fearful length to which some delusions have been carried, and the dreadful

effects to which they led, could never have existed had not the authority of influential men sustained them. In this very thing, witchcraft, all the madness and cruel folly were not of the people. Erudite theologians proved it from holy writ; legislators met it with dreadful penalties; learned judges approved the verdicts of ignorant juries; and civilized governments enforced each horrid sentence. Sir Matthew Hale, one of the finest scholars, one of the purest men, stamped such verdicts with his sanction and left them for the last result of law by his fatal sentence; and yet, in reading over the evidence given on some of these trials, we are convulsed between laughter and weeping at the silliness to which the wisest can descend and the misery and sorrow which their silliness can occasion. Besides, intellectual men are not always free from motives that, to speak cautiously, are at least open to suspicion, in their conformity to the prevailing sentiment. There is a fear of the multitude, where dissent might possibly bring danger, which will often restrain superior minds; for it is not all good logicians who feel themselves called on to be heroes or martyrs. There is a flattery of the multitude, also, of which greatest men are not always incapable, for the love of popularity, for the ambition of distinction, for the glory of applause, for the gain or the pride of office; and there is no flattery so sweet to masses or to individuals as the praise of their wisdom. A man will sometimes flatter a multitude who would lay his head upon the block sooner than flatter a king. Men of no common minds are often warped by the pressure of imposing masses, and are not always able to stand



against the temptation to speak what is agreeable rather than what is true. Multitudes, like monarchs, will not always bear the truth; and multitudes, like monarchs, will but seldom hear it. Both monarchs and multitudes delight in adulation; and as such is not what sincere friends can offer, sincere friends either of them rarely have. What they will pay for, *that* they get; and those who have praise to sell dispose of it, not for the good of the multitude, or the good of the monarch, but the good of themselves.

And *time* is no more an infallible test of truth than great masses or great names. This matter of witchcraft, which I have selected for my text and my example, had all the guaranty that time could afford. It had come down from the earliest ages, and from the earliest ages it had been condignly punished. A proposition is not true because it is old; it is not false because it is new. A proposition that now includes an essential truth is not less sacredly a truth in this hour than it will be at the end of a hundred centuries. We attach, in fact, a mystical value to duration which does not belong to it. Time is not an agency, and has no power in itself. Time is no causation. We say, to be sure, that cities waste by the lapse of ages, and that buildings turn to ruins by the force of years; but we only speak in a figure, although we often mistake the figure for a reality. Cities waste and buildings come to ruin by means of their own perishableness; but so is it not with nature. The heavens shine on with perpetual lustre; the ocean rolls, unworn, and strikes along the earth from century to century, with sounds that seem the echoes of

eternity. Yet we can conceive of the heavens falling into years and of the ocean dry as an autumn pool ; but truth and falsehood have no age, nor even in thought can we assign them any. Time, it may be said, does not *give* to an opinion its truth or falsehood ; it merely *proves* it. But not always. Tenets which we esteem the grossest errors have maintained their force for thousands of years ; and, if no foreign agencies disturb them, they may continue for thousands of years to come. Left to themselves, duration does nothing but confirm the delusion. Who can assign the era when the mythologies of India first began ? and, without other influences than time, who can tell when they are to end ? The energies of new minds, the force of new circumstances, cause a shaking among old dogmas and old institutions ; but without these they would lie as quietly as the bones that moulder in an unfrequented cemetery. How many hoary errors, how many consecrated vanities, how many venerable falsehoods, how many traditional fooleries have men in these later times discovered and discarded ! And herein they have carried forward the course of thought. But, while men discard some errors which do not suit them, they adhere to others, which, though more congenial, are not the less pernicious : and herein there is much work always for the thinker and reformer.

I would not, therefore, adopt an opinion because it is public opinion ; and, indeed, on that very account, I would scrutinize it all the more cautiously. There are cases in which what is called public opinion wants the first conditions of any real mental judgment ; for what are the first conditions of an actual, an impartial,

in fact, any mental, decision? Why, freedom of inquiry, freedom of discussion, freedom of expression. If I am hindered of these, though in but one particular, in that particular I can have no opinion. And the influence of this slavery extends beyond the reserved question; it injures the general fairness and activity of my mind. Let but one subject be interdicted, and that subject will in itself become the centre of a tyranny boundless in its ramifications. I am not really free; and if my thoughts are at all awake upon this subject, which I must not openly discuss, I feel that I am not free; I feel that my mind is in bondage, and that chains are upon my soul. You tell me in vain that in every thing else I have liberty. This is not true. Put a fetter on one foot of a man, and you restrain his entire body; clasp a manacle on his wrist, and the gall of the iron pinches him in every nerve. Turn me away from one question that I conceive it my right to examine, and you embarrass all the workings of my whole intellectual constitution. Place me in a house and debar me from but one apartment in it, and all my movements are by that single caution rendered uneasy. You tell me in vain that I am free to all the others. I am not free; I am constrained throughout; I am a captive on every spot on which I tread; it is a Bluebeard mansion to me; the door of the forbidden chamber haunts me wheresoever I may be in the house; I tremble when I pass it, and yet desire to open it; the key is in my hand; you give me leave to enter, but with the leave you inform me that my life shall be the forfeit. What liberty is this? and what, I ask you, does it signify

to me whether I am thus constrained by a majority or by a monarch? Where is the real difference? Neither does it much signify by what kind of penalty the restriction is enforced. You may fine, you may imprison, you may scourge, or you may kill me; or, not going thus far, you may confine my influence, circumscribe my talents, injure my name, deprive me of reputation, debar me from office, rob me of friends, banish me from home, starve me by systematic neglect, or wither me by passive resistance. One class of penalties is nearly as effective as the other. I admit that a true man must at any cost express his opinion; but martyrs are never so numerous as to constitute a public; and, if they became a public, they would then be no longer martyrs. Penalty is directed against expression, because *expression* is all that it can reach; and even this no power endeavors to control except in specific cases and always under the plea of a social necessity. The most absolute tyrant does not pretend that he can hinder thought; he assumes merely to regulate language. The most absolute tyrant does not imagine that he can entirely control the formation of opinion; he assumes merely to interfere with its publication. To prevent publication, or to punish it, includes all the claim he urges. And if he has any enlightenment, he does not press his despotism in an arbitrary spirit; on the contrary, he often tolerates a wide latitude of speculation: it is only when speculation enters on forbidden ground that he makes his power felt; and he can do this the more effectually the more that he admits of liberty in an opposite direction. Now, the conclusion to which we arrive

here is extremely simple: the mere prevalence of ideas or institutions is no test of their truth or of their worth; for either they may have never been examined or will tolerate no examination, and are thus maintained by the acquiescence of habit or the silence of coercion. And, as I have already said, it does not signify what form the power has which exercises this coercion, whether it be in the personality of a king or the abstraction of a majority; to the degree that it crushes discussion and meets the proclamation of thought with threatening or infliction, to that degree it is a tyranny. No excuse—not even what is called necessity—can clear it from this name within these limits; for the existence of the one includes the existence of the other; the tyranny creates the necessity, and the necessity bears witness to the tyranny.

Should we, then, in our estimate of opinion, pay no respect to the numbers who hold it, to the time it has endured, or to the great names by which it is recommended? I say not so. Any one of these conditions may entitle an opinion to our examination; but the whole of them united may not entitle it to our assent. The voice of the people may call for our hearing; and we ought to give it with candor and attention. The voice of the gifted, too, may ask of us to listen; and we ought to do so with intelligent respect. Nor is instruction alone our inducement; there is added that of an exalting pleasure. Communion with the wise is the joy of a noble soul; and, while such a soul draws increase of life from their wisdom, it does not lose, but gains, in dignity, individuality, and independence. It is in the same spirit I would regard the



authority of antiquity, which, recklessly to disregard, may involve more folly than the most submissive obedience. Much as some may decry the wisdom of our ancestors, yet what were we without that wisdom? What were we without the works which they wrought; the sciences which they studied; the arts and letters which they left us; the glorious principles which they consecrated for us; the faith and hope which they taught for our instruction and support; the deeds and sufferings which they accomplished for our good and for our example; the laws, the liberty, the civilization which we have as the last testament from generations of heroic fidelity and unconquerable struggle? When standing amidst scenes in which they lived and died, we feel how unworthy is that contempt which has nothing to admire in the glory of the past. When passing through the vacant halls in which the great of other generations reasoned or prayed, these solemn structures tell us, with more impressiveness than speech, that our fathers did not reason or pray in vain; and while we gaze on the beauty which fills the courts wherein they worshipped and crowns the towers which they raised, the souls, we know, could not be gross whose ideals took shape and body in forms so sublime. We muse upon the sainted ashes which these temples overshadowed; while we muse the fire burns; and from the very dust a flame comes out to melt the coldness of our hearts. We go away from their shrines with the glow of an unselfish enthusiasm upon our faces; we give God thanks that he has left no age barren of enriching graces — that he has left no age without wisdom, piety, and patriotism. Still we must

constantly fall back upon our own minds, and there seek for the real test of rectitude and duty. We must constantly subject the impressions from without to the scrutiny within, and try the voice of the multitude or the voice of ages by the spirit of reason. Honest to our best conviction, there is nothing that can do us injury; and, though we should stand alone, it is our duty so to stand. Traitors to our idea of right, we are then, and only then, properly alone; for we are cut off from all the true and holy men that ever lived; we are separated from all the just minds in the universe; we are dissociated from God himself, the perfect reason and the perfect right. We are then, indeed, ruined and ignoble; no genius can give us dignity, no applause can give us fame; we have done ourselves that injury which no energies of earth or hell could do us; we have branded our own souls with the black and burning stamp of an inward and spiritual infamy.

But what we call public opinion is sometimes more; it is public conviction; and this is sustained by individual decision, and has its strength from such decision alone, in all thoroughly free communities. Without the judgment of individual minds, whenever that judgment is possible, aggregate assertion is but temporary fashion, and it may change with the wind; but when it is the aggregate assertion of intelligent consent its direction is as fixed as the channel of a mighty river, and it is as irresistible as its cataract. It is, in fact, the action of a great law, a law of nature; and every law of nature is irreversible except by the Author of nature. In speaking of opinion in its utmost power, and especially in relation to its power on a large scale, in

the present age, I have mainly in view the strongest meaning in which the word is used. Our age, then, in the highest sense, is an age of opinion; and not the less, but the more so, because it is not an age of violence. The greatest agency of any force, physical or mental, is not that which we recognize in its violence; it is that of which, by reason of its order, we take but little notice. Violence is the agency of a restricted, and not of a diffusive, force; and accordingly it is sudden, casual, local, and transient. We are startled by the vivid flash of the lightning; we hear with awe the booming of the thunder; deluges lay districts in waste and strike their inhabitants with consternation; tempests plough into the depths of ocean; earthquakes shake into dust cities that were built to challenge time; and yet these are poor compared with the agencies which never cause astonishment. The flash of the lightning is nothing compared with the force of the moveless stars. The meeting of cloud with cloud, from which the thunder springs, is a trivial incident contrasted with the noiseless marriage of the earth and sun, from which there comes forth life and all that gladdens it. The dew transcends the deluge; the tempest is but a temporary destroyer; the tranquil air is the substance of a universal vitality. The earthquake or the volcano may desolate a province; but the mystic energy which tints a flower or shapes a blade of grass has not less evidence of the creative Being whose essence has no form and whose workings have no sound. Opinion is the agency by which the human mind most acts in society and on it. That agency in our country does not show itself in anarchy, but in order. It is thence

that it has such a power. It not only sanctions the form of government, but in a great measure indicates the nature of its authority and defines the limits of its rule. It not only chooses the makers of laws, but it overlooks their administration; and, passing beyond the bounds of merely technical law, it establishes an unwritten legislation of its own, which, right or wrong, it is all but impossible to escape.

Our country is peculiarly one of masses. We speak not here of men gathered into blind cohesion and moved in slavish obedience to command; we speak of men thinking and men free, each acting upon his own decision, and yet each acting with the whole. These are the masses, that in their gatherings are truly sublime; these are the masses, that, assembled together in sobriety and peace, in the dignity of individual choice, and the potency of collective will, exhibit a spectacle of living majesty than which the stars look down on nothing finer. The masses are becoming the supreme social authority. This power will be better conceived of when we think of it as diffused over the entire extent of the country, omnipresent from the centre to the extremities, lurking in every recess, quickening every impulse, intertwined with every interest, controlling every movement of the national existence. Consider that, of the millions of grown-up men in this nation, wherever they are, — tossed on the billows of the sea, roughing life on its rivers and its lakes, hewing down its woods, ploughing up its prairies, busy in its fields or cities, in its factories or forges, no matter how clad or how fed, no matter how lodged, be it in marble palace by the Hudson or

in log hut by the Arkansas, — consider, I say, that of these millions there is scarcely one whose head is not thinking, whose passions are not working, in connection with public events; consider that it is by such head thinkings and such passion workings public events are determined; find, if you can, an idea which will unite the aggregate of this power and the aggregate of its result, and you have the exponent of a greatness which, for compass and for importance, there are but few other earthly conceptions that can well outmeasure.

But here the question occurs, — a most solemn question it is, — What is the future to expect from this power? Is it to be a progress in excellence, or is it to be a growth in evil? The power may be in either of these directions according to its spirit and according to its training. Should it be in the wrong one, it would be terrible in proportion to its enormous strength. How, then, is this power to be not only safe, but hopeful; not brutal, but humane; not destructive, but gracious? By progressive culture, intellectual and moral; a culture not partial, but complete; the culture which builds up the man in his fulness and his maturity. The results of such a culture are wisdom and virtue, without which a nation can no more have security than an individual. A nation, like an individual, to be secure in the relations that are near, must look to those relations which are remote; and to sustain a worthy life, to enjoy enlarged and lasting good, a nation, like an individual, must lay restraint upon itself. Much might be said on this intellectual and moral wisdom and the means of diffusing it; all of it might be important, but all of it would not be suitable to this



essay. Much might be said upon the importance of sound and universal education, an importance amounting almost to a necessity. The danger of ignorance in a country so extensive, so various in its resources, and so comprehensive in its relations,—the danger of ignorance in a country with so vast and increasing a population, in which every man holds trust the most momentous,—is a subject which engages the best minds of the nation, and it is one upon which the best minds can have no more than sufficient power and no more than sufficient concern. No genius can be too august, no greatness of expression can be too impressive, to picture the danger to such a country from ignorance. Education is, as I have said, not merely a matter of prudence, but a matter of necessity : and as no education could be tolerated here except one that was animated by the spirit of political liberty, there is the more need to care for the spirit of individual liberty ; there is the more need to keep the organization of popular dominion from utterly crushing the action of individual independence. An education is of imperative consequence which shall cherish this individual soul ; which shall hold most sacred its rights of thinking and its rights of speech ; which shall honor fidelity to its own convictions and fearless expression of them ; which shall rear up the nobleness of the state in the nobleness of intellects, and not train up intellects to be sacrificed to the glory of the state. My object, however, is not to plead for general education, or to define what is the best education ; and, having ventured these hasty suggestions, I quit the subject. I will merely now, in this closing portion of my argument, offer

some remarks on two agencies which have incalculable impression on the mind of society and on its opinions : these are, public speakers and the public press.

The medium by which spirit communicates with spirit has in it something of sacredness in the humblest intercourse : it becomes a most exalted and a most religious trust when it assumes the position of public speech ; for what position is it that a public speaker can occupy which is not surrounded with solemn relations ? Is it the popular and political assembly ? Is it the court of law ? Is it the hall of legislation ? Assuredly it is none of these. Is it, then, the house of God ? It were blasphemy to say so. If a man can go among the people and not feel that the first duty he owes to them, to himself, to his country, to humanity, and to God is truth, that his imperative obligation is to tell it, he is not fit to address them. If he courts them for their patronage, if he flatters them for applause, counterfeit zeal as he may, it is kindled in selfishness ; it is nourished by the hopes of sordidness or vanity. He wants the essential requisite of an ennobling eloquence, of a genuine speaker, a brave and disinterested sincerity. If the honest man speaks, he must speak what seems to him the truth ; if this will not be heard, he must needs be silent ; if silence in the case be wrong, then, come what may, he must tell what he believes and gladly take the penalty it brings. If a man goes into a court of law and labors to wrest a decision, not by legitimate argument, but from crude feeling and false opinion, he becomes disloyal to the highest trusts which can be given or betrayed. He

owes a duty to his client, but he owes a higher duty to society, of which his client is a member; he is bound to make the best of his case, but he is not bound to establish it on the subversion of all the principles which hold men together in communities; and if the tendency of his doings issued in a general fact, his client would be destroyed in the common ruin, and his own success would be lost in the destruction of all security. If he contends that individual passion should judge the measure of its own wrongs and act with impunity on the judgment; if he substitute private vengeance for legal award — and to such purpose are pleadings that we have read on occasions not unfrequent; if he sets at defiance the general arrangements which collective experience has found necessary for social tranquillity and social defence, — he then becomes the ruthless spoliator of all peaceful protection; he profanes the sacredness of Justice under the shadow of her sanctuary; and he preaches the ghastly doctrines of anarchy in the very temple of civilization. If a man forgets the high commission which sends him to the legislature and the glorious purposes which should guide him in it, — if, on the contrary, he is mindful only of pride or faction, — he is more guilty than the other speakers to whom I have alluded by so much as the wickedness of that man is greater who poisons a fountain than he who sullies a stream. As to the pulpit, it is not a thing for comment here; I will merely observe, as Henry IV., of France, once remarked, “that if honor was banished from every other place on earth, it ought to be found in the

breasts of kings," so, if truth and fearless integrity had no refuge besides in the world, they ought to have in the pulpit an unconquerable fortress.

If I can conceive of nothing meaner than men who, in these situations, are disloyal to their trusts, I can conceive of nothing grander than men who have the ability to occupy them well and the virtue to occupy them faithfully; for what is there loftier in spirit or position than that of the man who stands up undaunted in the midst of his fellow-citizens to address them in words of noble wisdom, and not in the bluster of sycophant declamation; who loves them too deeply to deal by them falsely, and respects himself too much to bend to them slavishly? And surely, also, the office of the pleader, not less than that even of the magistrate, is a consecrated office, and he who is worthy of it must so feel it; the man whose sacred guidance is reverence for order; whose great desire, whether as accuser or advocate, is, that the cause of justice be maintained; and who will always be more ready to exert his eloquence for the destitute oppressed than for the rich transgressor. O, it is a glorious sight to see a man doing bravely the work that duty has appointed him to do; to behold him, strong in his generous hardihood of soul, firm in the might of his integrity, in the tranquil majesty of reason, and with the glow of a great enthusiasm, looking calmly on the dangers that appall more feeble spirits, vindicating the rights of humanity with that holy and that fearless speech which only humanity and heaven can inspire, with that holy and that fearless speech that flatters not nor quails in the presence of monarchs or the presence of mobs. I

would rather be for one hour such a man, have such an opportunity and be equal to it, than own all the empire which despots ever cursed, from Nero to Nicholas. I have specified a pleader; but what I have just said will answer equally for a senator — the man who toils through years of resisted struggle, not for questions that lie within the limits of his party, but for principles that are as wide as our nature, for principles that are as deep as our origin and as lasting as our existence. This man is not one who waits until a just measure is the mere *echo* of changed opinion, until the very selfish adopt it from popular expediency. He is not one who looks quietly on while a measure buffets for its life against the foaming waters of opposition, and when it gets safely on the shore “encumbers it with help.” He is one whose voice is often at first alone, a still small voice in the moral desert against the wind, and the earthquake, and the fire of strong and evil passions. He is one that estimates a good cause and true as worth more than cheers or smiles, and a thing not to be forsaken for the sneer of the sceptic, the jest of the witling, or the yell of the vulgar. He has faith in his work; and often the consolation is given to him to behold his work increase; to behold the hidden places of corruption exposed and the growth of a thousand wrongs prevented; to behold harsh enactments repealed, cruel codes abolished, and inhuman abuses eradicated; to behold more care and pity awakened for the neglected, more earnest desire to cure the soul rather than to kill the body, and in the whole of legislation more tolerance, more wisdom, and more mercy. The speaker in the pulpit can take a yet higher place than any; for



to him are given more commanding themes and the sanction of a holier authority. Let him feel the worth of his themes, let him feel the power of his authority, and no other speech can have the life of his. Meet always for time, for place, and for relation, it yet contains the spirit in it of the eternal, the universal, and the absolute. Let him see *humanity* in all ; let him speak *to* that and *for* it ; he will then always speak nobly and he will always speak truly. He will speak out from an abundant sympathy ; he will speak out of an enlarged fulness of expression ; he will speak out of an enlarged compass of charity. He will not sever religion from justice, nor dissociate sanctity from goodness ; though pointing to the skies and inciting the soul to upward and infinite aspiration, he will not overlook the ruggedness of the path on which poor mortals travel ; he will pity those who fall, and aid them again to rise ; he will encourage those who faint, cheer them, and keep them onward ; he will share with them himself fully the struggles of the pilgrimage ; and while opening to them all holy scripture, while discoursing on all holy things, he causes their hearts to burn within them, it is as he talks to them by the way, in the companionship of the same journey to the same destination. Not unmindful of the prosperous, he will care thoughtfully for the destitute ; no railing accuser, he will yet not fail when occasion calls to plead the cause of the injured and the weak ; manly, but humble ; dauntless, yet meek ; fearing none and loving all ; his opportunities are grand, and, if he uses them, his work is blessed. Filled with the solemnity of his office, he will preserve it sacred from the passions of the world ;

conscious as he is that life is but a narrow isthmus between two eternities, a little space of grayish twilight in the midst of darkness, on one side of it the mysteries of being and on the other the depths of the grave, he will have no disposition to mingle in the noisy and selfish emulations around him. He is not sent to conform to social prejudices, or to flatter popular impulses, or to echo acceptable opinions; to cry aloud with the multitude for the figment of the age or the vanity of the hour. No; his mission is to immortal souls, to draw them from their faith in delusions to the desire for perfection; from the sophistries of falsehood and the misleadings of passion to the simplicity of truth and the security of rectitude; to address them in the whole range of their moral existence; to insist without compromise on its everlasting rights and changeless obligations; to keep nothing timidly back, but openly and bravely declare the whole counsel of God and the whole duty of man.

All that I have written will apply with tenfold emphasis to the press. A writer in a daily or any popular periodical can address a thousand for every hundred that the most popular orator can generally collect. The press, as true to its own highest greatness, is the sublimest creation of modern society and modern civilization. It is the champion of liberty, the friend of virtue, the punisher of vice, the advocate of the injured; it is the shield of the feeble and the scourge of tyrants. The press, when faithful to its exalted duties, has an austere but yet a benignant influence. It keeps watch over the best interests of the community; but its vigilance is that of a guardian,

and not of a spy. It brings out modest merit to the light and cherishes it with cordial praise ; it vindicates the innocent while it chastises the guilty ; it stirs up the lovingness of compassion ; it urges on the exertion of charity ; it pleads the cause of the needy ; it tells the story of their sufferings with ten thousand tongues ; it calls for sympathy towards them with every entreaty of eloquence and pathos ; it carries abroad the orphan's prayer and it causes the widow's heart to sing for joy. Such I take the press to be in its legitimate vocation. But, when false to this, it becomes the pander of low appetites, the minister of gross or malignant passions, the fomentor of strife and violence ; when it bandies virulent abuse and unscrupulous invective in the degrading interchange of scurrilous personalities ; when it caters for the hunger of a vicious curiosity, the wretched offscourings of gossip and of scandal ; when it violates the sacredness of homes, and oversteps the just limits of a public censor, to intrude on the rights of private character ; when in great concerns it substitutes accusation for argument and odium for discussion ; when it defends at every hazard to truth the side on which it is enlisted, and shrinks from no misstatement that offers an advantage ; when in the zeal for party it gives up the cause of right to the demands of a corrupt expediency, or in the zeal of creed immolates charity on the altar of the sect, or, for the furtherance of a tortuous policy or the ends of individual ambition, sacrifices the claims of justice and humanity at the shrine of power, — it then strips itself of dignity and clothes itself with baseness ; it

does not teach, but deprave, the mind of the community ; and it is not the glory, but the shame, of liberty.

Let freedom be cherished ; first of all, and last, let freedom be held sacred ; let it be guarded and sustained ; for it is the essential condition of all noble existence, and without it no generous virtue can come to its maturity. Let the loss of freedom be regarded as among the greatest of calamities. No mere abstract or aggregate dominion can compensate for it. We do not live as masses ; we live as individuals. All real life is individual ; to the degree, therefore, that individuals are crushed, life is crushed. I can accept of nothing for my personality ; and this personality I know only in my freedom. Take that from me, and you leave me nothing after worth the keeping ; take that from me, and you destroy me. This freedom rests within the mind ; it is the very life of intelligent existence. There is, therefore, in the universe nothing more desirable than a free mind ; as there is nothing more sublime, nothing more godlike. So-long as a man has this, he has that which is invaluable ; he has that which nothing can subdue ; he has that which nothing can subvert ; he has that which renders him a monarch, though he may lie down upon the bare and cold bosom of his mother earth ; he has a throne which is established forever and a kingdom which can never know an end. He is independent. A rack may tear his body, but it cannot touch his soul ; a dungeon may hide him from the light, but he has a light within which nothing can extinguish. Changes of fortune may come rapidly upon him ; each may be the messenger of a new affliction ;

his worldly riches may disappear ; his children may die ; his friends may desert him ; his foes may revile him ; his health may leave him too ; sickness may turn his fairness to ashes ; yet poor, companionless, weak, with none to bid him hope and none to do him reverence, he has in that independent soul of his a grandeur before which the blaze of royalty grows pale ; he has in it a might before which the powers of empire are feeble. This is the freedom which a man should guard invincibly ; which he should hold most religiously ; and which, if he parts with, his life is little worth. This is the freedom which a man should esteem above political privilege, above outward prosperity, above all the comforts of ease, and above all the pleasures of sense.



## THE PHILANTHROPIC SENTIMENT.

I PROPOSE to make some remarks on the sentiment of philanthropy ; the sentiment of love to man in general, irrespective of locality, of condition, or of creed. And, despite of the acutest logic which the ethics of selfishness can use, I hold that philanthropy is a reality ; that it has evidence most manifest of being a quality of our nature. We are conscious of benevolent regards towards men merely as *men* ; and, because they are simply of our kind, our hearts prompt us to do them good. When the occasion strongly urges, this becomes apparent with the force and certainty almost of an instinct. Our souls are constantly excited by deeds of the highest charity done to strangers, and frequently not only to strangers, but to enemies ; the poetry, the songs, the romances of all ages and nations imply the glory of this sentiment ; and no literature was ever founded on the opposite or the denial of it.

Still I can conceive of a person saying that it is all a fiction, without reason to sustain it as a possibility, or evidence to sustain it as a fact. He would, perhaps, insist that man, as a species, is too vast an object to be comprehended by the imagination, and much less to be infolded in the affections. But, further, he would possibly insist, that, laying aside all merely speculative

considerations, the spirit and the conduct of the world go to show that the idea of philanthropy is a phantom or a mockery. Nor can it be denied that, looking severely upon the actions of society, he might bring much that would be plausible, and not a little that would be true, to support the practical side of his objection. But I do not assert that there is *not* in social conduct a great deal that mars this sentiment, that is harshly inconsistent with it, that is strangely contradictory to it. Still I do contend that its elements are in the human heart, in every human heart. I shall make no attempt to meet that part of the objection which implies the impossibility of the sentiment from the vagueness or greatness of the object; for if the objection were indeed valid, then any general sentiment were impossible; as for instance, the love of virtue, because virtue is a thing spiritual and impalpable; the love of God, because God is infinite and inscrutable. Waving at once all metaphysical argument, I shall here devote some remarks to the sentiment, considered first as an inspiration, and considered secondly as an agency.

As an inspiration, the sentiment of philanthropy is most quickening and most expansive. The case is not thus with the selfish passions. The heart in which they are strongest has the fewest sympathies and the coldest nature. Men, it is true, have many combinations based upon the selfish passions; but in such combinations there is no loving interchange of spirit, there is no mutual bestowment of confidence and respect. Men may be joined in the compact of profitable wrong; but, though the bonds of interest be many,

bond of unity there is none. Men may be bound together in low and worldly purposes ; but their estimate of each other is on a level with their objects. These generate no love among themselves and attract no love from those outside their association ; collectively or individually, they inspire no general admiration or affection. It is not thus with philanthropic characters or philanthropic deeds. Tell the remotest tribes, of a preëminently benevolent man in language which they can fully understand, they will love him ; and they will love you who tell them, if they see in you a likeness to him. Against such a character national differences and national dialects do not prevail ; the beauty of it is discernible in every climate, the worth of it is translatable into every language. It rises above all wars and hatreds ; it sheds calm light upon human strifes ; and, for the moment, it shames them into peace. Frenchmen hew down British ; yet to the fiercest Gaul the name of Howard would be a word of reverence. Englishmen devastate France ; yet would the rudest soldier among them bend in the presence of a Fenelon. The thoughts and deeds of such have no limitation ; they come out from the love of humanity, and humanity claims them for its own. They are the elements of the eloquence to which all nations listen ; they are the elements of the poetry that all nations feel ; and, whether in oratory or song, with them, indeed, is a universal spirit and a universal speech. Observe how the eyes of an assembly will kindle, and how their hearts will beat, and how their breath will hang upon the speaker's word when he recites, with whatever plainness, the doing of a generous action or draws the picture of a

good man's life. But let that good man himself speak ; let him go before them moved by interest for his kind ; let him address them from the fulness of his heart, and that the fulness of a mighty love : the souls that were dead become alive ; they are quickened into his own great being ; they are dilated with his enthusiasm ; they are torn from the earth to which they were fastened ; they are carried up into the heavens as in a chariot of fire ; they are transported with the splendor of the prophet upon whose countenance they gaze, in whose light they rejoice ; they are elevated to the loftiness of his views ; they burn with the fervor of his zeal ; and though much of this will depart when the prophet is silent, yet will not the prophet pass away without leaving some of his spirit behind him.

Every age as well as every nation confesses the power of philanthropic inspiration. The consent which men give to selfish sentiments is as transient as it is bounded. The prejudice or passion of the day is always strong, blind as it is strong, and tyrannical as it is blind. Profit and power for a time laugh to scorn truth and justice. The sophists and the self-seekers prosper. The sycophants of dominion dress finely and fare sumptuously. Evil expediency governs the world ; and it hesitates at no means and it scruples at no instruments. The teachers of true wisdom are hooted and mocked. The defenders of right and of humanity are ridiculed as visionaries, or they are tortured as destructives. The apostles of good will are hunted from city to city, and they suffer or they perish for their work. Socrates drinks his poison ; Elijah flies to the desert and hides himself in the cave ; Paul

endures bonds, imprisonment, and dies upon the block. But, then, there *was* a Socrates, there *was* an Elijah, there *was* a Paul ; and so it is, that often in the worst of periods humanity vindicates itself the most heroically and the most divinely. The age of tyranny is that of the patriot ; the age of persecution is that of the martyr ; the age of political corruption is that of the political reformer. It is, too, when the hearts of the taskmasters are most dead to the cry of the oppressed, when the sighings of the forlorn are deepest by reason of their bondage, that heaven is pierced by their supplications ; that God looks down on the misery of his suffering children ; that his ear opens to their groanings ; that he comes to their help against the mighty ; that he raises up advocates to plead their cause ; and that he calls forth deliverers to break their chains. And thus it is in times often when hope seems no longer for our nature that light bursts out from the gloom and covers the face of humanity with the glory of a new beauty. And though an evil generation may kill the bodies of mankind's benefactors, it cannot kill their souls ; dust goes to dust, but the spirit lives onward still ; and thus spirit works out in one age repentance for the sins of another ; and not repentance only, but amendment also. The children blush at that in which their fathers gloried ; the fathers slew the prophets, but the children canonize their memories ; and though while the children discern the guilt of their fathers they are often blind to their own, yet something is gained by the acknowledgment of past error. Great excellence, like great truth, is but gradually opened to the mind of men ; when, however, it is fully



discerned, mankind esteem it as the treasure that has no price and that never can be lost.

As an agency, how manifold are the works of the philanthropic sentiment, all works of good, and, not the least among them, its works of mercy! Wherever the sorrowing are concealed, Mercy seeks them out. Wherever misery hides from scorn, wherever penitence lies in the dust, there Mercy enters with her tearful eyes and her gentle words. I might speak much on the *outward* works of mercy—I might speak on that bounty which imitates the deeds of Christ, so far as man's weakness can imitate divine power. I could not, indeed, tell of sight restored to the eye that had been rayless, or of sound given to the ear which had been closed, or of motion and speech restored to the tongue which had been fastened and silent. I could not tell of health and strength miraculously bestowed on the maimed and the palsied frame, or wisdom on the torpid or frenzied mind, or the dead called up from the tomb to gladden once more in life their mourning friends, or of sinners converted by marvels from above; but I might speak of homes for the blind and the dumb, where humanity does all that it can do to illuminate the darkened sense and to cheer the lonely heart. I might speak of asylums for the insane, where benignant skill in bestowing peace of intellect on the benighted soul seems to call back the age of miracle. I might speak of institutions which are a shelter for the widow and a guardianship for the orphan. I might speak of institutions which are open to childless age, where a rest is prepared for the worn frame and for the hoary head. I might speak of

habitations which invite the lost and the unhappy to fly from crime and want; and, thus speaking, I might choose for the field of my illustration the whole field of the world. Nor would I confine my remarks to efforts for the improvement of men's physical and temporal condition; for the intellectual and moral wants of mankind also engage a most extensive and a most enlightened benevolence. Philanthropy has apostleships for the higher man; and, if time allowed, there are many of which I would wish to speak — many that cause great hearts to ponder, that enlist for their advancement wisdom, piety, genius, and eloquence; apostleships that control the plans of the statesman and enter into the hope of the Christian. I might speak of those good messengers which philanthropy sent down into the gloomy mine to bring childhood to the air of heaven and to give it to a human life. I might speak of the ministries which philanthropy has established for the education of the neglected and the poor; of the winning charities by which it has sought to attract vicious and ragged youth within the sound of decency and hope. I might speak of those ministries which it has despatched into the dark retreat of city vice and destitution, not alone to give refreshment to the fainting body, but to offer help to the perishing soul. I might speak of those ministries which philanthropy has carried to the prison, not merely in surrounding the captive with cleanliness, and light, and the common courtesies of men, but in the wise discipline which would reform his habits, the kind influence that would soften his affections, the Christian instruction that would regenerate his mind, the godlike

clemency that abhors contempt and vengeance, that would redeem, if possible, a spirit to its own respect and give it back recovered to society. I might speak of the ministries which philanthropy exerts respecting the guilty on the spirit of the community, urging it to reform rather than to destroy, and upon repentance to take once again its erring child to the shelter of a friendly bosom, not to repulse him in his approaches, but rather to meet even while he is yet a great way off, to help him to forget his degradation rather than to pour fresh shames upon his head, and thus to drive him, in his despair, to seek for refuge in lower depths of infamy. I might speak of the ministries which philanthropy exerts for universal emancipation, for universal freedom — ministries by which it endeavors to render freedom coextensive with the right to it, as the right to it is coextensive with man. I might speak of the ministries which it commissions with the glad tidings of faith to men in distant nations, of fierce habits, and of strange tongues, regarding them all as brothers, however separated by distance, by habits, or by tongues; yearning, despite of their differences, to gather them all into the one household of God. I might speak on the various services which these labors have directly and collaterally done to civilization, how they have laid bare the world, how they have discovered its remote places, instructed barbarous tribes, opened new sources of wealth and knowledge, enlarged intercourse, translated languages, established schools, and laid the foundations of great, of growing, and of humanizing institutions. Of such things willingly I would speak; but, with these

brief allusions, I must leave them to confine my attention to a single point.

The point that I would particularly notice is, that the works which are the most durable in the world are those in which the sentiment of philanthropy is the most imbodyed. Humanity recognizes what belongs to itself, loves it, honors it, and preserves it. The rest it does *not* understand, and leaves it to vanish with the accidents with which it was associated. That which has been done for *man*, man will uphold ; but that which belongs merely to the time will pass away with the fashion of the time ; it will wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture it will be changed. Those nations, therefore, which developed most of the being of humanity live most in the *life* of our race. The Egyptians, with their concealed enigmas and their monstrous structures, have utterly and forever perished. They have gone into absolute oblivion, and a darker night has fallen upon their history than any with which they have covered the mysteries of their religion. The soul of their nation is as voiceless as their Titanic heaps of earth ; their spirit is scattered with the dust or buried under symbols inscrutable ; their land is a mighty grave — not a collection of tombs, but one huge sepulchre ; the Pyramids are monuments of tyrants and their slaves ; they once overlooked a wilderness of life ; most appropriately and most fitly, they now overlook a wilderness of death. What traces have the Assyrians or Persians left of their widespread conquests ? They who carry nothing but the brand and the sword imprint deep marks of their existence for a period in the burning and bloody furrows of their

course; but healing time closes them up and covers them with verdure: men keep no memory of those who brought them nothing except evil: the wicked are swallowed up in the darkness which they create; and exterminators perish in as deep oblivion as their victims. And why should they not? Why should men desire to immortalize, even in infamy, their enslavers and destroyers? Why not leave their memories to rot with the general offscouring which age after age destines to corruption? So is it not better that men should *forget* rather than *remember*, when they can remember only to curse? The malefactors of History are buried in her prison yard; and they rest as obscurely as meaner but less guilty criminals. There let them lie.

The nations, as I have said, that contained most of our general humanity continue most to live; and as our examples can properly be taken only from ancient ones, I refer especially to Judea, to Greece, and to Rome. Even in these, *that* alone endures which is of our essential and universal humanity. The temple and ceremonials of Judea are no more; the people of Israel are a scattered remnant upon earth; but the Bible survives unworn, and the spirit of it belongs to all regions and all times. The grace and majesty in which Greece enshrined her mythology were the palace and decorations of a vision; the fabric has dissolved almost with the emptiness of the vision, and left almost as little of a wreck behind. But her poetry, her history, her eloquence, her philosophy, — these have *not* dissolved; for they have that in them of our soul which renders them everlasting. Rome, with respect to her sway, has



transmitted little to us except the traditions of her conquests ; but she has bequeathed laws to mankind which are as changeless as equity. But, still, the general tendency to universality which distinguishes modern civilization, and which will give to modern civilization its permanence and progress, did not exist in any one of these. Their best civilization was partial and exclusive. The civilization of the Jew was confined to a family ; it was domestic, local, ritual. The civilization of the Greek was limited to a few special tribes ; it was mythical, oligarchical, and artistic. The civilization of the Roman centred in giving empire to a single city ; it was military, and its chief aim was conquest and glory. Pride became the foundation of them all ; and each, according to its own ideal, labored to raise on this foundation the superstructure of its national grandeur. The civilization of the Jew rested on the pride of race ; that of the Greek on the pride of knowledge ; and that of the Roman on the pride of power. Christianity alone would base civilization upon the new commandment of charity, and make the life of it the spirit of brotherhood and the love of mankind. And it is as this spirit grows into the affairs of mankind that we advance securely, it is to the degree that it has penetrated the movements of society that we have really advanced. And wherever there is most liberty for the mind and least danger to the body, wherever education is best and legislation wisest, wherever right is the most enjoyed and the least violated, such is the spirit that prevails. There is no man, therefore, however lowly his station, however few his opportunities, however moderate his talents,

that out of a sincere heart acts for the love of his kind, but adds to the good which is immortal and divine. On the other hand, there is no man, whatever be his genius, his rank, his popularity, who narrows his heart towards his fellows, who blinds his moral sense to any rightful claim of justice or benevolence, who takes part with the wrong, but binds his fame to a body of death, and must go with it to corruption and to oblivion. Christianity is the element in modern civilization that secures it against the vicissitudes of ancient civilization. Empires decayed; cities left no trace where they had stood; structures most stable crumbled and fell down; nations became extinct; governments turned to fooleries, and laws to idiot babble; for the abiding life of our nature was not in them: change was to them annihilation; and, when their forms were broken, their being was at an end. With a civilization into which Christianity enters this cannot be. Revolutions may change constitutions and dynasties; cities may be plundered and devastated; property may be injured or destroyed; but the principles of Christ, which are the principles of truth, of goodness, no deluge of invasion can sweep away and no force of battle can strike down.

The relation which the philanthropic sentiment bears to some other sentiments shall occupy the remaining portion of this essay.

It is not independent of the more intimate sentiments, and cannot be cultivated separately from the sentiments of home or country. Nay, it is by means of these that it has existence, and it is by the associations with which these connect it that it becomes a strong and a

moving principle; for if the idea of home, with its primitive instincts and its domestic affections, had no charm on my heart or imagination, it is plain that, applied to the world at large, it would be a cold and a lifeless abstraction. It would have no meaning, no power, and no impulse. If the idea of my nearer kindred aroused no fond emotions in my breast, it were vain to tell me of kindred to my race. If I had no loving bonds which united me with a small home family, there are no ties by which I could be made to feel united with a boundless world family. Country becomes dear through the endearment of home; and the sentiment, as it widens to the fulness of its compass, embraces our kind within the circle of its regards. This must be the order; for, if we had never loved those near to us whom we have seen, we could never love those afar off whom we have not seen nor can see. But, the feeling once existing, the association once originated, I not only bring the distant man more into connection with this near emotion, but, in the force of it, I *understand* his being, and I can interpret his nature by my own. I appreciate, by these means, his gladness and his grief, his wishes and his fears. In the degree that I thus feel I am saved from doing him evil I am urged to do him good; in the degree that we both mutually feel thus we are friends and benefactors. He has like relations to life that I have. He, as I, had a mother, and lay an infant on her bosom; he had a father and a roof he called his home; and, though he come from the other side of the globe, there are some passages of a common experience between us. When he is delighted or when he mourns, I have some knowledge

why he rejoices or why he weeps. And this feeling is not less necessary in social and moral disparities than in national differences and distance ; it is necessary to keep alive the sense of our universal humanity, to strengthen the bonds of our kindred, to preserve unbroken that unity of sympathy which we may call the catholic faith of a common nature. It is necessary for the charities of our spirit to feel that the remote and colored savage is our brother ; that he has human instincts, human affections, which to him, as to ourselves, have their share of blessing and of suffering ; but it is often also just as necessary to feel thus towards the poor man at our doors or to the criminal within our borders. Adversity will indeed frequently so mar the visage of our neighbor that, left to our selfishness, we would not willingly claim relationship to him ; and guilt may so disorder the soul of even our nearest friend that our pride would tempt us to deny him. But the knowledge that any of us may be victims of distress or of temptation, united with the emotion of a large benevolence, will cause us to despise no man for his outward condition, nor to approach any without compassion, whatever be his sin.

As the philanthropic sentiment arises out of the more immediate affections, so these affections are not complete if the philanthropic does not rest upon and ennoble them. Men may have very devoted affections within their homes, and be very selfish men notwithstanding. Men may be very loving within their thresholds, but, outside them, be rapacious, unmerciful, and unjust. A savage may cherish the most ardent attachment to the locality with which he is connected ; but

if his affections extend no farther he is still a savage, though these affections should be ever so heroic. Such beings do not, and cannot, love their homes or their country nobly. To love nobly in our homes, in our circle, or in our country, we must love them in their highest relations. The husband does not love his wife truly until he loves more in her than the wife ; until he loves her, not merely as his, but as herself ; not merely as a pleasant companion, but as a spiritual agent ; until he recognizes in her, and reverences, an immortal humanity. A man does not truly love his child, his friend, his brothers, his compatriots until he discerns in them the claims of that great nature on which God has stamped the image of his divinity. This will enlighten and dignify his affections ; it will raise them up from simple instincts into exalted moral feelings ; and, while it guides him wisely towards those to whom he is attached, it will guide him to be kindly and friendly towards all besides.

The philanthropic sentiment does not set aside any other, and it does not take the place of any other. It does not abrogate, and it cannot replace, the domestic sentiment. This is too closely inwrought with every instinct of the heart, too deeply imbedded in its earliest feelings, to have its impressions effaced by remote considerations or to have its want supplied by general principles. Nor can the patriotic sentiment, more than the domestic, be abrogated or replaced by the philanthropic. The philanthropic sentiment does not abrogate, and it cannot replace, the sentiment of duty. The qualities of motive and of deed are all that conscience assumes to judge ; and conscience, as Bishop Butler



finely observes, if it had the power as it has the right, would assuredly govern the world. The philanthropic sentiment does not abrogate, and it cannot replace, the sentiment of religion. The sentiment of religion transcends all relations of the visible. It reaches to those which belong to the unseen, the eternal, the absolute, and the perfect. We defend, then, no theoretical philanthropy. We speak of that which grows out of the natural affections, and which, far from setting them aside, is only their full and adequate expression; we speak of that in which the best sentiments of the spiritual and social being have their ultimate development and their noblest manifestation. We do not deny that this, like other tendencies of our nature, may run into extravagance, and so become, even with the best desires, an uncompromising and intolerant enthusiasm. Granting all this, are there no visionaries but those of philanthropy? Has not selfishness, also, its Quixotisms? Has it not its airbuilt delusions, its treasuries of gilded clouds, its dream-formed plans, its passionate expectations, its unsubstantial hopes, its persuasions the most frenzied, and its anticipations the most absurd? Which has most crammed the asylums of the insane, which has caused the most maniacs — the enthusiasm of humanity, or the enthusiasm of worldliness? Which has wrecked more brains into hopeless madness — the struggles for man, or the struggles for vanity?

But, after all, Christianity gives us the only practicable philanthropy; for Christianity is the truest of all systems to the order of Nature. It associates moral principles as well as moral sentiments with the home

affections ; and thus it makes the nearest emotions, guides to the remotest duties. It honors every stage and every condition of humanity, the child as well as the patriarch, the beggar as the king, the savage as the sage ; it does not confine our kindred to the fireside, but carries it out into the whole family of man ; and, lest the feeling of kindness should grow cold by such abstraction, it constantly recalls us to our firesides again. Theorists, from Plato to Godwin, have been constructing systems for man's perfection ; but the systems did not admit of even temporary application. Ancient systems have been long forgotten, and the authors of those more recent have seen the children of their fancy laid in the tomb of an early oblivion. These theories have left no impressions on society, they have established no institutions, they have rectified no errors, they have strengthened no principles, they have imparted no power ; they merely dazzled as they flashed along their narrow track, but gave no ample or steady illumination to the world. All abstract speculations, ancient or modern, which have been designed for the moral government of man, have endeavored to make him something else than that which he is and to procure some other end for him than that for which he seems fitted and created. Upon opposite principles, but with the same success, they have regarded him as an angel, or a brute ; as a pure intellect, or as a passive machine ; as a child of peace, or a lover of destruction ; as a being of mere sensation, or as one capable of an entire independence on the senses ; as a natural egotist, or a natural philanthropist ; and he, the mean while, stood unmoved by

any of their systems, and equally distant from them all. Men pretended in these schemes to aim at universal peace, happiness, and perfection; they would render their kind blessed without laying hold on those affections and faculties in the progress and cultivation of which their felicity consists; they would render them perfect by destroying their nearest relationships, by blighting all that enlightens and consoles, by converting all the intimate charities of life into joyless generalities. They pretended to build up universal benevolence on the ruins of domestic love; to give goodness a wider freedom by cutting its nearest ties; to open fuller channels of virtue by drying up all its immediate fountains; and, having thus severed man's soul from home, from brethren, from country, and from heaven, they congratulate him on his victory over prejudice; they congratulate him on his extent of dominion when all is desolation; on his fraternity when all are strangers; on his wisdom when he believes nothing and nothing is left him to believe; they congratulate him on his grandeur when there is no love in the present and no hope in the future; they congratulate him on his emancipation from the bondage of custom and superstition when they have delivered him into the glorious liberty of a universe *where there is no Deity, but where all is death*. A generation not far separated from our own saw an attempt to reduce such doctrines to practice. It commenced with a declaration of the widest philanthropy; we know in what it ended. Calling themselves prophets of liberty, the men who made this attempt became tyrants and anarchists; they substituted abstract maxims for homeborn

feelings ; they substituted pagan fables for evangelical revelations ; they endeavored to repeal the natural and the religious affections ; they endeavored to reduce their atrocious theories to fact ; but, while they urged on their plans of universal welfare, nations stood aghast in terror at a mission of massacre preached in the roar of the cannon, sealed with the baptism of fire and of blood. The regenerators, nothing daunted, swept along in their apostleship of lust and carnage ; onward and onward they continued, growing wilder in their progress ; hope fled from before and desolation followed them ; onward still they kept until their destiny was complete, until they perfected an example that history might record for an everlasting warning. If these preachers of philanthropy did not establish a blissful millennium on a godless and homeless earth under a fatherless heaven, in the midst of graves, among tombs inscribed with the epitaph, “ *Death an eternal sleep,*” they gave to the world such a spectacle of sensuality and slaughter as the world, we trust, will not be in haste to copy.

## MUSIC.

THE mere capacity in man of perceiving sound renders the musical element a necessity in nature and in life. Discord, as a permanent state, is as inconceivable as a permanent state of chaos. The combinations of sounds, therefore, in the audible creation, if not all in detail musical, are pervaded by the musical element. No ear is insensible to the music of the air in the branches of a tree; to the groaning of it in the hollow cave; to its whistle in the grass, or to its spirit voices in a stormy night around the dwelling. No ear is insensible to the trickling melody of the stream, to the deep song of the river, to the solemn anthem of the torrent, to the eternal harmonies of the ocean. Birds are peculiarly the musicians of the animal world. But how skilful and how rich their music is, we must learn, not from the printed page, but in the sunny grove. Though other creatures have not, as birds, the gift of song, yet are they not unmusical or without their parts in the mighty orchestra of living nature. Musical sounds are grateful to the sense; and all beings that hear enjoy and need them. In music, man has a common medium of sympathy with his fellow-animals. The charger prances to the sounds that swell the heart of his master; for he, too, has a heart



which they can enter and dilate. A melody can soothe the lion's rage. The elephant treads delighted to the measure of the band. The dog bays gladness to the shepherd's flute. The cow stands in placid rapture while the milkmaid sings. Man is scarcely ever so rude as to be beyond the reach of music. It was a myth, containing as much truth as beauty, that feigned Apollo with his lyre as the early tamer of wild men. If music is the first influence which the race feels, it is also the first which the individual feels. The infant opens its intelligence and love to the mother's song as much as to the mother's face. The voice, even more than the look, is the primitive awakener of the intellect and heart. Every mother ought to sing. A song will outlive all sermons in the memory. Let memories that begin life have songs that last for life.

As a *sensation*, music has power. A little maid I have known, who would sit on her cricket by her father's knee until he had read the whole of *Christabel*, of which she did not know the meaning of a line. It was melodious to her ear, and merely in its music there was enchantment to her infant spirit. The songs which primitive people sing, in which they have their best social interchange, are frequently poor in diction and bald in sentiment. It is the music that gives the words a life; and this life can transfuse energetic inspiration into the meanest words. Early melodies are, of necessity, most simple; they are the instincts seeking to put themselves into measured sound, yet with little to fill the ear, and less to reach the mind. Nevertheless, they are good for the mind and pleasant to the ear. A rude musical sensation is of

value ; of how much more value is a refined musical sensation ! But a musical sensation is of its very nature a refined one. It is among the purest of sensations. It may, indeed, be associated with coarse and base emotion : the base emotion, however, is not in itself ; it is in the imagination or the word — music simply, as music presents nothing to the sense that is either coarse or base. The conception is from the mind to music, not from music to the mind. Speaking of music as a sensation, I speak relatively ; for to man there is no music without *soul*. In music soul and sense both mingle and become *one* in its inspired sound.

Yet the least part of music is the mere sensation ; it is not on the ear, but on the heart, that its finest spirit dwells. *There* are the living chords which it puts in motion, and in whose vibration it has the echoes of its tones. The heart, after all, is the instrument with which the musician has to deal. He must understand *that* from its lowest note to the top of its compass. The true test of music is the amount of feeling it contains ; the true criterion of a love for music is the capacity to appreciate feeling in music. Music properly is the language of emotion ; it is the language of the heart ; its grammar, its rhetoric, its eloquence, its oratory are of the heart. The evidence of its power is in the calm or the quivering pulsation. Feeling in music is a memory, a sympathy, an impulse. Nothing can recall with such vividness as music can a past emotion, a departed state of mind. Words are but the history of a by-gone thought ; music is its presence. All our profoundest feelings are in their nature lyrical. Whatever most deeply affects us,

we do, in some way, link to tune, or they are by tune awakened. The feelings *sing* of themselves and make an orchestra of the brain. Persons utterly incapable of putting the simplest combination of sounds musically together will make melody in their hearts of the reminiscences that strongly move them. And these will commonly be sad, as all is that is connected with the past; sad, however, with various degrees of intensity — some will be but calm regrets, others dirges and requiems. Therefore it is that the most affecting melodies belong to the past — to the past in the life of a man, to the past in the life of a nation. Such melodies come not from prosperity or power. They come from those who have missed a history or whose history is over. Such melodies are voices of sadness, the yearnings over what might have been but was not, the regret for what has been but will never be again. And thus, too, it is with the most affecting eloquence. That which agitates the breast with force resistless is the word which is fraught with the passions of its sorrow. Life in power is action; life in memory is elegy or eloquence. A nation, like a man, dreams its life again; and until life is gone or changed it soliloquizes or sings its dreams. The music of memory lives in every man's experience; and the excellence of it is, that it binds itself only to our better feelings. It is the excellence of our nature, also, that only such feelings have spontaneous memories. The worst man does not willingly recall his bad feelings; and, if he did, he could not wed them to a melody. Hatred, malice, vengeance, envy have, to be sure, their proper expressions in the lyric drama; but of themselves they are not musical

and by themselves they could not be endured. It is not so with the kind emotions. They are in themselves a music ; and memory delights in the sweetness of their intonations. Love, affection, friendship, patriotism, pity, grief, courage, whatever generously swells the heart or tenderly subdues it or purely elevates it, are of themselves, of their own attuning and accordant graciousness, of a musical inspiration. With what power will a simple strain pierce the silence of the breast and in every note break the slumber of a thousand thoughts ! It is a positive necromancy. Faces long in the clay bloom as they did in youth. An inward ear is opened through the outward, and voices of other times are speaking ; and words which you had heard before come to your soul, and they are pleasant in this illusive echo. Your spirit is lost in the flight of days and insensible to the interval of distance ; it is back in other hours and dwells in other scenes. Such are the mysterious linkings by which music interlaces itself with our feelings, and so becomes an inseparable portion of our sympathy. But sympathy exists only when music answers to the spirit. Give not a merry carol to a heavy heart, although you may give a grave strain to a light one. Music, as rightly used, is, as some one calls it, “ the medicine of an afflicted mind.” Joy is heightened by exultant strains ; but grief is eased only by low ones. “ A sweet, sad measure ” is the balm of a wounded spirit. Music lightens toil. The sailor pulls more cheerily for his song ; and even the slave feels in singing that he is a *man*. But in other forms of labor we miss, in our country, the lyric feeling. Most of our work is done

in silence. We hear none of those songs at the milking hour which renders that hour in Europe so rich in pastoral and poetical associations. We hear no ploughman's whistle ringing over the field with a resonant hilarity. We have no choruses of reapers and no merry harvest feasts; but, if such things cannot be naturally, it is vain to wish for them, and it may be even useless to mention them. Better things, perhaps, are in their place — grave meditation and manly thought; and I merely allude to them as elements that accord pleasingly with certain modes of life in countries to whose habits and history they are native. Music in social intercourse is a fine awakener of sympathies and a fine uniter of them. A violin or a piano is often not less needed to soothe the ruffled spirit of a company than the harp of David was to calm down the fiend in the turbulent breast of Saul. Music, as we see in the customs of all nations, is used as an antidote to the sense of danger as well as a stimulus to the passion of combat. And, as embattled hosts move with measured tramp to the field of death, music is the magic that is trusted to charm away fear or to call up courage.

Largely are men indebted even to the music of ballads and of songs. Difficult it would be to measure the good which such music has done to mankind. To multitudes in days of yore songs were the only literature; and by the bards they had all their learning. Songs were their history, their romance, their tragedy, their comedy, their fireside eloquence, giving utterance and perpetuity to sacred affections and to noble thoughts, and keeping alive a spirit of humanity in



both the vassal and the lord. Men have not yet ceased to need such influences, nor have such influences lost their power. They still add purer brightness to the joys of the young, and are a solace to the memory of age. They are still bonds of a generous communion. They banish strangeness from the rich man's hall ; they add refinement to the rich man's banquet ; they are joy in the poor man's holiday ; they express lovingness in the poor man's feast. What so aids beneficent Nature as such music does to remove barbarism and to inspire kindness ? How dear amidst all the toils of earth are the songs which were music to our infant ears, the songs of our hearth and of our home, the songs which were our childhood's spells, a blessedness upon our mother's lips, a rapture and delight ! What solaces the exile while it saddens him ? What is it that from the ends of ocean turns him with wistful imagination to the star which overhangs his fatherland ? What is it that brings the tear to his eye, and the memory of other days, and the vision in the far-off west ; that annihilates years and distance, and gives him back his country and gives him back his youth ? Song, inspired song, domestic song, national song — song that carries ideal enthusiasm into rudest places with many a tale of marvel and magnanimity ; of heroism in the soldier and sanctity in the saint ; of constancy in love and of bravery in war.

Man is a social being ; unselfish society is the harmony of humanity ; loving interchange is the music of life, the music which lifts the attuned soul above discordant passions and petty cares ; and song is the voice in which that music breathes. These are the strains

that have memories in them of all that true souls deem worthy of life or death — the purities of their homes, the sacredness of their altars, the hopes of their posterity ; all for which martyrs suffer ; all for which patriots bleed ; all that gives millions a single wish and a single will ; all that makes the cry of liberty as the trump of judgment, and the swords of freeman as the bolts of heaven. Glorious names, and glorious deeds, and honorable feelings are always allied to the lyric spirit. The independence of a country may seem to be utterly lost ; the ruin of a nation may appear decided ; indeed, its external destiny may be accomplished ; but the character of a people is never absolutely degraded until the lyric fire is dead upon the altar and the lyric voice is heard no longer in the temple.

Music is not exhausted in expressing feeling, though some persons are so constituted as not beyond this to understand or to enjoy it. But music of more profound combination is not on this account without meaning and without value. The higher forms of music, like the higher forms of poetry, must of course, if tested by mere instinct, seem remote and complicated. Music, too, is susceptible of more multiplied combinations than poetry, and, without the restraints of arbitrary signs and definite ideas, can expatiate in the region of pure imagination. In the true sense of the word it is infinite : not bound to form, not bound to color, not bound to speech, it is as unlimited as the capacity of the soul to exist in *undefinable* states of emotional being ; and into these it can throw the soul with inconceivable rapidity of change. The great master even of a single instrument appears, indeed, a wizard. He

seems, in truth, to be the only artist to whom the designation of wizard can with any correctness be applied. Men of other genius may be creators ; but the musician is the wizard. His instrument is a talisman ; it is full of conjurations ; out from it he draws his witchery ; he puts his spell upon all around him ; he chains them in the slavery of delight ; and he is the only despot that rules over willing captives. No other power on the imagination is so complete, so uncontrollable. The fiction or the poem you can lay aside ; the picture or statue moves you but calmly ; the actor is at the mercy of an accident ; the orator may fail by reason of your opposition to his sentiments or opposition to his person ; but the musician draws you from every thing which can counteract his charm ; and, once within his circle, you have no escape from his power. Emotional conceptions, solemn, gay, pathetic, impassioned, are as souls in all his sounds. But, in the case of an executive musician, the art seems incarnate in the artist. We associate the personality of the artist with the effects of his art. We are not yet within the limitless domain of imaginative music. The great instrumentalist is, indeed, a wizard, a cunning necromancer ; but he is before us while he works his spells ; and, though we cannot resist the enchanter, we *behold* him. In a great composer there is a higher potency, and it is one that is not seen. The action of his spirit on our spirits, though exercised by means of intermediate agents, is yet that of an invisible incantation. The great composer is an imperial magician, the sovereign of genii and the master of wizards. He is a Prospero, and *music* is his *enchanted island*.

The creative musician, and the region in which he dwells, can have no analogy more correct than that presented to us in Shakspeare's extraordinary play of the *Tempest*. There we have the loud-resounding sea; at one moment the sun bright in the clear sky, at another hidden by the mist or breaking through the bloodred cloud; now the heavens are full of stars, and in an instant they are thick with gloom; the elements gather into masses, they clash together, and the thunder and the waves fill up the chorus. Then the day dawns softly and the morning breaks into summer songs. Caves are there and pleasant dells; solitudes are there, dark and lonely; spots beautiful as well as terrible; barren and blasted heaths, where goblins hold their revels; and labyrinthian walks, where sweet hearts, not unwilling, lose themselves and linger. The earth, the atmosphere, shore, stream, grove, are filled with preternatural movements, with sweet voices and strange sounds. There are Ariel melodies, there are Caliban groanings; there are the murmurings of manly passions and the whisperings of maiden love; there are bacchanalian jovialities, high and mysterious monologues, fanciful and fairy ditties, the full swellings of excited hearts, and the choral transports of all Nature, made living and made lyrical. But the Prospero who rules in this island dwells in a lonely cell, and yet commands all the voices of the universe to do his bidding. Have I not, by this analogy, described a grand imaginative composer? Without intending it, I have described Beethoven. I speak, I admit, only as one of the appreciating vulgar, as one of the impressible ignorant; I am able only to express a sensation, not to

pronounce a judgment. In listening to Beethoven's music there is a delight, for which, no doubt, the learned artist can give a reason. I know nothing of art, and with me the listening is an untutored, a wild, an almost savage joy or sorrow, or a mixture of emotions that cannot be defined. The music of Beethoven, if I can judge from the little that I have heard of it, is *unearthly*; but the unearthliness of this music is of a compound nature. Like Spenser's, Beethoven's imagination is unearthly; and, like Spenser's, it is unearthly in the supernaturally beautiful. Like Milton's imagination, also, Beethoven's is unearthly; but here it is unearthly in the mysterious and the solemn. The union of these elements in the wholeness of Beethoven's genius has given to us that singular, that most original music which seems to belong to the ideal region, that Eastern fancy has peopled with genii and fairies. What a wonderful thing is a symphony of Beethoven's! But who can describe it in either its construction or its effects? You might as well attempt to describe by set phrases the raptures of St. Paul or the visions of the Apocalypse. It always seems the utterance of a mighty trance, of a mysterious dream, of a solemn ecstasy. The theme, even the most simple, so simple that a child, as it might appear, could have fashioned it, is one, however, that genius of a marvellous peculiarity only could have discovered — a genius that worked and lived amidst the most ideal analogies by which sounds are related to emotions. And this unearthly theme is thrown at once into an ocean of orchestral harmony, and this orchestral harmony is as unearthly as the theme. Thrown upon the orchestra, it seems to



break, to divide itself, to scatter itself upon the waves of an enchanted sea in a multitude of melodies. It seems as a tune played by a spirit minstrel, on a summer night, in the glade of a lonely wood, to which all the genii of music answer in choruses of holy, sad, enchanting modulation.

And of Mozart, — what shall we say of him — of Mozart, less only than Beethoven in those strains which linger amidst remote associations, but versatile beyond most composers in the romance and reality of the comic and the tragic in actual life? If ever a genius lived with which all its work was play, that genius was the genius of Mozart. Constantly he made the merest play of genius. At ten years old he could astonish the most critical of musical audiences in Paris; and, before their rapture had approached within many degrees of moderation, he would be romping in the crowd of his companions. Nor was it different in his maturity. He could compose a piece in which he was himself to take a part. He would distribute the score perfectly arranged for the several performers. As they played he would turn over page after page along with them, always in the spirit of the music and its harmony; but the emperor, looking over his shoulder, could see that not a note had he written down. Mozart seemed to combine in his genius all the sweetness of Italy with all the depth of Germany. But on these themes I have no authority to speak. All I can say is, that what I have heard of his compositions, and most of what I have learned of his life, have led me to think of him with admiration as a musician and with affection as a man.

Music, it is sometimes said, is not an intellectual art. *What does this mean?* Does it mean that music employs no intellect in the artist and excites none in the hearer? The assertion in both cases is untrue. Music, as a study, must, I think, be profoundly intellectual. In the oldest universities it has always had a place among the abstract sciences. But, considered as an enjoyment, considered in relation to the hearer, we should first need to settle what we understand by an intellectual enjoyment. To work a problem in algebra or to examine a question of theology may be each an intellectual pleasure; but the pleasure, it is manifest, is in each case very different. These both, it is true, agree in taxing the *reasoning* faculty; but is nothing intellectual but that which formally taxes this faculty? Is nothing intellectual but that which involves syllogism, but that which implies demonstration or induction? Prayer is not intellectual if we identify intellectuality with logic; and, if we do this, it is *not* intellectual to feel the merits of a picture, but peculiarly so to understand the proportions of its frame. According to such a theory it is intellectual to analyze with Aristotle; but it is not so to burn and to soar with Plato. To speculate with Jeremy Bentham is intellectual; but it is not so to be enraptured by the divine song of Milton. Assertions which lead to such conclusions must be radically false. Whatever puts man's spiritual powers into action is intellectual. The *kind* of action will, of course, be ever according to the subject and the object. The intellectuality of a statesman is not that of a bard; the intellectuality which concocts an act of Parliament is not that which

composes a "Song of the Bell." Music is neither inductive nor ratiocinative. It is an art; that is, it is an inward law realized in outward fact. In this music agrees with all arts; for all arts are but the outward actualities of inward laws. But some of these are for utility, others for delight. Music is of those arts which spring from the desire for enjoyment and gratify it. It bears the soul away into the region of the infinite and moves it with conceptions of exhaustless possibilities of beauty. If ideas, feelings, imaginations are intellectual, then is music; if that which can excite, combine, modify, elevate, — memories, feelings, imagination, — is intellectual, then music is intellectual.

An art which, like music, is the offspring of passion and emotion, could not but take a dramatic form. The lyrical drama, secular and sacred, civilized humanity could not but produce. Nothing is more natural than that the gayety and grief of the heart should seek the intense and emphatic expression which music can afford. It would, indeed, be extraordinary if a creature like man, so covetous of excitement, so desirous of varying his sensations, did not press into his service, wherever it could be used, an art which has no other equal to it for excitement and variety. The opera, both comic and tragic, is a genuine production of this desire. The burlesque, the odd, the merry, the absurd, and, still more, pity, love, jealousy, vengeance, despair, have their music in the rudest states of society; it is only in the order of things that they should in cultivated states of society have a cultivated music. Such music, as a matter of course, would connect

itself with a story, a plot, with incident, character, scenery, costume, and catastrophe. It would thus become *dramatic*. Thus it has become; and, as such, it has a range as ample as that of human life, as deep as human passion, as versatile as the human fancy and the human will. Hence we have the opera. The opera is that form which the drama assumed among a people musically organized — among a people whose love of music was therefore intense, constitutional, and expansive. But no art remains within the limits of its native space; and the opera is now as extensive as civilization — as extensive, certainly, as modern civilization. The ballad is the first comedy or tragedy. There are germs in the words of the ballad for the genius of Shakspeare — there are germs in the air of it for the genius of Rossini. Many object to the opera; first, they say, it is expensive. All our amusements are expensive — expensive as they ought not to be — expensive as they would not be with a higher and purer social culture. Artistic amusements are expensive, especially, by the want of taste which hinders the many from sharing in them — by the want of taste which makes *expense* itself distinction. True taste coincides with true feeling; true feeling delights in beauty, as it delights in goodness, for its own sake; and true feeling being as wide as nature and humanity, the more widely its delight is shared the greater its own enjoyment. Were there among the people a diffusive taste for elevated music, we cannot but feel that music could be cheap as well as noble. But, secondly, many say that the opera is unnatural. It is absurd, they quizzically aver, that persons should sing their love talk, their

madness, their despair, &c., and grieve or laugh, die or be married, in sharps or flats, in major or minor. And yet this is exactly what Nature does. Nature sings all its stronger emotions. The moment expression becomes excited it has rhythm, it has cadence; and the tune of Rossini is nearer to instinct than the blank verse of Shakspeare. Who will say that genuine passion is not in this wonderful blank verse? But who is it that could impromptu speak it? So in the tones and harmonies of music. In both Nature is carried into the region of Art, out from the region of the actual; and within the region of Art the musical utterance of Nature is no more strange than the poetical utterance of Nature. The moral view of the opera I do not here pretend to deal with. My purpose is to speak on music as an element of social culture; and it is not beyond the range of possibility that beautiful truths can be united dramatically to beautiful tones. If they cannot, then society has an immense loss; and if a noble story cannot be told by music, cannot be told to a moral purpose, then music ceases to be an art, as it has always been considered as associated with the divinest impulses of our nature. The abuses of which the opera is susceptible are the abuses of which every form of art is susceptible. The artist stands, he has ever stood, upon a point between the human and divine. He may carry his art into gross sensualities of the human or into lofty spiritualities of the divine. With the purification of society we shall have the purification of art and of the artist; and, therefore, I can see no reason why the opera might not be made effective in the best culture of social humanity. The lyrical



expression of humanity is not less human than it is religious.

The sacred lyrical drama, or oratorio, seems to be a remnant of the old mysteries. In those old mysteries a scriptural subject was exhibited to the people in a theatrical manner. The scriptural subject is all that remains of the old mystery in the modern oratorio. Stage, scenery, costume have departed, and music takes their place. Music, therefore, in the oratorio, must, by its own power, indicate character, sentiment, passion ; it must unite grandeur and diversity with unity of spirit ; it must unite them with unity of expression. Yet even the oratorio has not escaped objection. But, if it has been wrongly attacked, it has been as unwisely defended. What, it is triumphantly asked, can inspire deeper devotion, more fervent piety, than the sacred composition of Handel ? The mistake of the artist on this side of the question has its only measure in the mistake of the ascetic on the other. The strains even of Handel may be in unison with the highest and purest aspirations of the mind ; but in his divinest dramas they are not, of themselves, devotion. But if high music confers a pleasure that harmonizes with the mind's best faculties ; if it prepares the mind's best faculties for their best exercise ; if by lifting the mind up into the sphere of great emotions from that of mean ones, if by withdrawing it from attention to selfish desires, it carries it into lofty thought, — music exercises for the mind, even in the temple, a sacred power, though its power should yet only be artistic. No mind, for instance, can be in a low or degraded condition while it is in sympathy with the pure and

delectable genius of Haydn. No mind can have communed with him through his oratorio of the Creation; can have drunk in its gladdening hymns of praise, that seem to sparkle with the light which they celebrate; its anthems of holy exultation such as the sons of God might have shouted, breathing the young soul of goodness and beauty, — no mind, I say, can be in such communion, and for the time be otherwise than transported beyond all that can degrade or can defile. But Handel excites a profounder sentiment. He is not so cheerful as Haydn. He could not be; for this he is too massive and austere. He does not, like Haydn, lead the mind out to Nature; he turns it in upon itself. Not loveliness, but mysteries, make the spirit of his music. We find in Haydn the picturesqueness and the buoyancy of the Catholic worship; in Handel, the sombre, the inquiring, the meditative thoughtfulness of the Protestant faith. By Haydn's Creation we are charmed and elated; by Handel's Messiah we are moved with an overcoming sense of power. Though nothing can surpass the sweetness of Handel's melodies, yet, interspersed amidst such masses of harmony, they seem like hymns amidst the billows of the ocean or songs among the valleys of the Alps. Handel's genius was made for a subject that placed him in the presence of eternity and the universe. His moods and movements are too vast for the moods and movements of common interests or the common heart. They require the spaces of worlds; they require interests coincident with man's destiny and with man's duration. Though Handel's airs in the Messiah are of sweetest and gen-

tlest melody, they have majesty in their sweetness and their gentleness. We can associate them with no event lower than that with which they are connected. In such tones we can conceive the Savior's birth celebrated in the song of angels—in such tones we can fancy the Redeemer welcomed in hosannas by those who ignorantly dragged him afterwards to Calvary. And then the plaintiveness of Handel in the Messiah has its true horizon only in that which girds the immortal. It is not simply plaintive; it is mysteriously awful. It is not a grief for earthly man; it is a grief for Him who bore the griefs of all men; for Him who carried our sorrows, who was wounded for our transgressions, who was bruised for our iniquities, who was oppressed and afflicted, and who bore the chastisement of our peace. It is not a grief in which any common spirit dare complain; it is fit only for Him who had sorrows to which no man's sorrows were like. It does not cause us to pity, but to tremble; it does not move us to weeping, because there lie beneath it "thoughts which are too deep for tears." And then, in unison with this dread and solemn pathos is the subdued but mighty anguish of the general harmony. When the victory is proclaimed—the victory over the grave, the victory over death, the victory in which mortality is swallowed up of life—we are lost in the glory of a superhuman chorus; our imagination breaks all local bounds; we fancy all the elements of creation, all glorified and risen men, all the hosts of heaven's angels united in this exultant anthem. Handel truly is the Milton of music.

The grandest office of music, however, is that in

which, no doubt, it originated ; that in which, early, it had its first culture ; in which, latest, it has its best — I mean its office in religion. In the sanctuary it was born, and in the service of God it arose with a sublimity with which it could never have been inspired in the service of pleasure. More assimilated than any other art to the spiritual nature of man, it affords a medium of expression the most congenial to that nature. Compared with tones that breathe out from a profound, a spiritually musical soul, how poor is any allegory which painting can present or that symbol can indicate ! The soul is invisible ; its emotions admit no more than itself of shape or limitation. The religious emotions cannot always have even verbal utterance. They often seek an utterance yet nearer to the infinite ; and such they find in music. You cannot delineate a feeling ; at most, you can but suggest it by delineation. But in music you can, by intonation, directly give the feeling. Thus related to the unseen soul, music is a voice for faith, which is itself the realization of things not seen. And waiting as the soul is amidst troubles and toils, looking upward from the earth and onward out of time for a better world or a purer life, in its believing and glad expectancy music is the voice of its hope. In the depression and despondency of conviction, in the struggles of repentance, in the consolations and rejoicing of forgiveness, in the wordless calm of internal peace music answers to the mood and soothingly breaks the dumbness of the heart. For every charity that can sanctify and bless humanity music has its sacred measures ; and well does goodness merit the richest harmony of sound,

that is itself the richest harmony of heaven. Sorrow, also, has its consecrated melody. The wounded spirit and the broken heart are attempered and assuaged by the murmurings of divine song. A plaintive hymn soothes the departing soul; it mingles with weeping in the house of death; it befits the solemn ritual of the grave. The last supper was closed with a hymn; and many a martyr for Him who went from that supper to his agony made their torture jubilant in songs of praise.

An essay equal to the subject on the vicissitudes and varieties of sacred music would be one of the most interesting passages in the history of art. In their long wanderings to the land of promise sacred music was among the hosts of Israel; and in that great temple of Nature, floored by the desert and roofed by the sky, they chanted the song of Miriam and of Moses. It was in their Sabbath meetings; it resounded with the rejoicings of their feasts and with the gladness of their jubilees. When Solomon built a house to the Lord it was consecrated with cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, with the sounds of trumpets and the swell of voices. As long as the temple stood music hallowed its services; and that music must have been supremely grand which suited the divine poetry of the inspired and kingly lyrist. Israel was scattered; the temple was no more. Silence and desolation dwelt in the place of the sanctuary. Zion heard no longer the anthems of her Levites. A new word that was spoken first in Jerusalem had gone forth among the nations; and that, too, had its music. At first it was a whisper among the lowly in the dwellings of the poor; stealthily



it afterwards was murmured in the palace of the Cæsars. In the dead night, in the depths of the catacombs, it trembled in subdued melodies filled with the love of Jesus. At length the grand cathedral arose and the stately spire; courts and arches echoed and pillars shook with the thunder of the majestic organ; choirs, sweetly attuned, joined their voices in all the moods and measures of the religious heart, in its most exalted, most profound, most intense experience put into lyrical expression. I know that piety may reject, may repel, this form of expression; still these sublime ritual harmonies cannot but give to the spirit that sympathizes with them the sense of a mightier being. But sacred music has power without a ritual. In the rugged hymn which connects itself, not alone with immortality, but also with the memory of brave saints, there is power. There is power in the hymn in which our fathers joined. Grand were those rude psalms which once arose amidst the solitudes of the Alps. Grand were those religious songs sung in brave devotion by the persecuted Scotch in the depths of their moors and their glens. The Hundredth Psalm, rising in the fulness of three thousand voices up into the clear sky, broken among rocks, prolonged and modulated through valleys, softened over the surface of mountain-guarded lakes, had a grandeur and a majesty contrasted with which mere art is poverty and meanness. And, while thus reflecting on sacred music, we think with wonder on the Christian church, on its power and on its compass. Less than nineteen centuries ago its first hymn was sung in an upper chamber of Jerusalem, and those who sung it were quickly scattered. And

now the Christian hymn is one that never ceases, one that is heard in every tongue ; and the whisper of that upper chamber is now a chorus that fills the world.

Music is an essential element in social life and social culture ; and our times have few better movements than the increasing introduction of vocal music into popular education. The higher kinds of music might be included in all the higher kinds of education for men as well as for women. Milton so teaches in his great treatise ; and so the Greeks practised, in whose training no faculty was wasted or overlooked. The music which is now most wanted, however, is music for the common heart. If education will give us the taste for such music and give us the music, it will confer upon us a benefit, a blessing. It is not desired that music in the home or in the friendly circle should never wander out of the sphere of the home or the friendly circle ; only let not these spheres of feeling be without any strains peculiarly suitable to themselves. Let the theatre have its music, let the camp have its music, let the dance room have its music, let the church have its music ; but let the home and the friendly gathering also have *their* music.

We have for the cultivated music of rare power and in great abundance ; but we need a music for the people ; and no music can be music for the people but that which answers to simple and direct emotion. It is a most important need. The music of the opera, granting it were ever so pure and had no resistance to encounter, can be had only in cities, and can never reach the scattered masses of the population. The

music of the oratorio has a limitation even still more restricted. Popular music must be domestic, social music. We have it not; therefore we are a silent people, and our writings have no lyrical inspirations. The finer and deeper elements of popular life have no true medium of exposition. These subtle, delicate, wordless idealities of the soul, which the rudest have, are without music — that alone which can take them from the confining bosom and give them to the vital air. Our rural life is gladdened by no song, is the subject of no song; and our social life is almost as silent as the rural. National music we have none; and our political songs are generally a shame to doggerel and a libel upon tune. Complaining on the want of social and domestic music will not, I am aware, supply it; and yet it is no less a want. We want it on the summer's evening, when our work is done, to rest the spirit as we rest the body, and, while the eye is filled with visible beauty, to bring the soul into harmony with invisible goodness. We want it in the winter's night, by the winter fire, to cheer us while the hours pass and to humanize in amusing us. We want it in our friendly reunions, not for delight alone, but also for charity and peace, to exclude the demon of idle or evil speaking and to silence the turbulence of polemical or political discussion. We want it in our churches. Christianity is the home feeling and the social feeling made perfect. The music of it should be the home feeling and the social feeling consecrated. As it is, our Protestant churches at least have either a drawling psalmody with the monotony of a lullaby, or they have patches of selections that want unity, appro-

priateness, or meaning. A music is wanted in our Protestant churches such as Christianity ought to have ; a music simple, yet grand ; varied, but not capricious ; gladsome with holy joy, not with irreverent levity ; not sentimental, yet tender ; solemn, but not depressing ; not intolerant to the beauties of art, and yet not scornful of popular feeling. If a true and natural taste for music should spring up and be cultivated through the country, not in cities only, but in every village and district, it would be an auspicious phenomenon. It would break the dulness of our homes, it would brighten the hour of our meetings, it would enliven our hospitality, and it would sublime our worship.

## THE COST OF A CULTIVATED MAN.

“EACH *bon mot*,” says Goethe, “has cost me a purse of gold; half a million of my own money, the fortune I inherited, my salary, and the large income derived from my writings for fifty years back have been expended to instruct me in what I know.” This declaration was made by the poet in a conversation with his friend Eckerman. It is pregnant with instruction. It is at once a lesson and a rebuke; a lesson of diligence and modesty, a rebuke to superficialism and presumption. There is nothing that we seem to consider less than the mighty cost at which we have every thing — every thing in the order and the enjoyment of life, the commonest as well as the rarest. That I could write these words, there was an infinite amount of expenditure in my favor. To say nothing of the suffering, and toil, and thought, the wisdom, and the heroism, and the martyrdom, which the civilization that surrounds me has *cost*, the amount of care and labor by which I am supported is enormous; nor less is that by which I am protected. The mere materials and implements which I use in writing are beyond my skill. Yet I will look upon a glorious piece of painting, and take it perhaps as a thing of course. It possibly comes not to my mind to think what years of prep-



aration it has exacted of the artist ; it may be that I fancy I am doing him compensating honor when I mark his name with some threadbare epithet or hail his work with some expletive interjection. But, if the truth is in me, I will not assume to be his judge ; I will gladly revere him as my benefactor. I turn over the pages of a profound or beautiful book ; my eye glides along the words ; I vaguely apprehend the purport of separate sentences ; but into the unity, or spirit, or power of the whole I have not entered ; possibly I have not the ability to enter. I close the volume ; and in a few brief moments, in a few crude words, I pronounce a judgment on it. The weakest sentence in the book I have not, perhaps, qualification to write ; I may want the sufficient inspiration, I may want the adequate learning, I may be incapable of the simple industry which the most subordinate portion of the work demanded. Yet I fancy that I can measure it in the entireness of its execution and its plan. Even if I am qualified to read the book, and read it with sympathy, I shall still fail in estimating the expense to the writer at which it has been produced. But the expense in the production of the book is trifling ; the great expense has been in the education of the author. I mean not, of course, the mere teaching of the writer by schools or reading, but that whole action on the man which prepares him for his agency in life as well as in art. The picture or the book is but little in comparison with the cost of the author and the artist ; and both the artist and the author have their value in the *man*. The cost implied in the being of a cultivated man is the thought which the words of Goethe excited

in my mind ; and out from this thought I will try to write.

In such a calculation we must begin with what Nature supplies ; for this is necessarily the substance of all development and the subject of all culture. A fine thinker has observed that man is an expensive animal ; but man has an original and inherent worth, which constitutes the main value of whatever he *becomes*, and which he retains even in his meanest and in his lowest state. To be a man, is to be the grandest being in the midst of creation ; for man is at once the epitome of Nature and its head. Base as man may sometimes seem, and shocking and repulsive as in many conditions he is, the very abhorrence that we feel when thus we see him springs from our sense of the contrast between his actual state and his divine possibilities. The contrast is apprehended whenever man is miserable and thought is present. The feeling of such contrast is the source of tragedy in letters, of philanthropy in sentiment, and of beneficence in action. This contrast comes not to thought by elaborate analysis or by the consecutive inferences of logic ; it comes in immediate and sympathetic impulse ; and, when we behold any of our kind out of natural or moral harmony with our idea of immortal and intelligent existence, we behold them out of harmony with our idea of humanity. There is, then, a worth in man by reason of his mere humanity ; and this worth cannot be taken from him. It is independent of condition, and not in the power of fate. This worth is in a man even though he himself may not know it or though another may not apprehend it or acknowledge it. If the consciousness has

never been or has been but weakly felt, because a man's condition or fate has not been propitious, then condition or fate has allowed him to be but imperfectly a man. Outward suffering, toil, and want are not to be compared with an insufficiency like this. The same fact is only differently stated when I say that he who cannot discern the worth of humanity in another cannot be noble in himself, but is of a narrow and a blinded life; for, if the consciousness of such worth were in himself, in that consciousness would be included the recognition of a like worth in every man. The deepest curse in power and passion is their tendency to harden the soul to the common worth of humanity; for it is in the sense of humanity's worth that justice, reverence, mercy have their inspiration; it is the principle of moral universality, and without it education is contracted and liberty is selfish. True and liberal culture opens the mind more and more largely to the common worth of man. The apprehension of superiority in others, separate from the sublime worth that belongs to all, crushes independence; such apprehension of superiority in ourselves inspires arrogance; in either case it is a littleness. The man who does not know that his power of life is by what he has in common with men, not by that wherein he differs from them, has been wanting in the best conditions of a right culture, and exhibits the worst result of a bad one. The individual, in his utmost magnitude, is nothing as an isolated life; it is only as he *imbodies* the instincts and experience of our common nature that he has spiritual size and spiritual vitality. The mind that is capacious and that has been wisely trained has extended its sympathies rather than sharpened its

criticism ; has acquired an aptitude for assimilation rather than a facility of rejection. Such a soul cannot have the temperament of scorn or contempt ; for scorn or contempt is foreign to the law of any noble nature. A noble nature is sad when it cannot reverence ; mourns when it cannot admire : from every thing it can learn ; and it is always willing to be taught. It discerns the true and the good, the grand and the beautiful, wherever truth and goodness, grandeur and beauty, are within its range ; while its range is only bounded by its faculties and by its life. It puts its spirit into other souls, then receives of that spirit back again ; and what comes to it directly from other souls it clothes with the power of its own. It often imparts the glory in which it rejoices ; its very mistakes are magnificent ; and if sometimes it wanders amidst illusions, they are the illusions of generous imaginings, and not of sharp, envious, or depreciating passions. But there is every where so much that is latent, so much that is undeveloped, so much to seek for, and so much that never can be found, — there is every where so present to the mind the idea of undiscoverable truth, of impenetrable mystery, and of unapproachable perfection, — that any genuine soul, if it does not begin its culture in humility, must surely in humility continue and end it.

That which is greatest in a man, then, is that which he has in common with all men ; and, in the degree that this is made conscious in him by faculty and by sympathy, he is commanding in any distinct manifestation of power. But for such distinct manifestation of power there must be distinctive endowments ; and these again are by nature. Mysteries of spirit and organization



meet us at this point for which philosophy has no solution. The *fact* is all we know. We see it in the phenomena, but the cause lies behind the fact; the essence is within the phenomena, and all is inscrutable. A man comes once in recorded time, and in that by which ages distinguish him he stands alone. Such a man is never repeated in the species. Yet such a man must be rich in what he inherits collectively with the species, as also decisive in what separately marks his individualism. By nature Paganini had depth and intensity of passion; but so has many an oyster dealer: he had a wild imagination; so have gypsies and red Indians: he was odd, grotesque, and fitful; so are the silliest humorists: he was melancholy and superstitious; so are the merest fanatics: it was the combination of these several qualities, musically inspired, that constituted his genius; a physical power correspondent to his genius gave him the full command over it; all united made him what he was — *the wizard of the violin*. This no mere labor could have made him; yet not without labor either could he have been this; not without labor — labor indefatigable and most patient, in which enthusiasm and capacity attained to their seeming miracles of achievement through the discipline of slow and toilsome progress. Effort, exertion, even drudgery, are, indeed, the price of such perfection; but the materials of it are supplied by Nature. But, in such cases, the part which Nature has is not likely to be underrated. It is what diligence and training effect that is most in danger of being misunderstood. In those manifestations wherein Nature shows itself in outward force and passion Nature gets all the credit, and Art is



overlooked. In those wherein Nature works more inwardly Nature is not regarded, and Art has all the praise. But Art may be as severely cultivated in the one as in the other; and, for supreme excellence, Nature is equally essential for both, and in both must be equally powerful. Nature, too, has not less of energy, but often more, when the mind is inward in its action than when it is outward. Nature, for instance, is not less, but more, intense in Hamlet than in Richard; and analogously it may be so in persons who represent Shakspeare as in his characters. Nature would seem predominant in Edmund Kean, and Art in Mrs. Siddons; but this would be only *seeming*. A little insight would discover that Art was as subtle in Kean as in Siddons, and Nature as strong in Siddons as in Kean. If an utter stranger had come into an Athenian assembly while Demosthenes was addressing it in one of his impassioned orations, he might fancy that this rush of impetuous power came from immediate impulse, and that the speaker owed every thing to Nature. If, in like manner, a stranger had entered the Roman forum while Cicero was declaiming one of his hastily prepared discourses, he might suppose that the speech was as elaborately conceived as it was uttered, and that the man was entirely a man of Art. But the Greeks who were acquainted with the history of Demosthenes could tell one stranger how much their great orator was indebted to labor; and the Romans who were familiar with Cicero could tell the other how naturally their illustrious pleader came to be a speaker. Two kinds of mistake are occasioned by these two kinds of genius.

Men of a certain turbulence of spirit think they are *impassioned*; men of a certain tame capacity persuade themselves they are *thoughtful*; the ideal of the former is vehemence, the ideal of the latter is elegance; the first class think that to be furious in speech is Demosthenic, the second class suppose that to be mellifluous is to be Ciceronian; the one despises industry, the other mocks at impulse; but both in different ways may be only feeble, the one as incapable of the grandeur of passion as the other may be of the strength of meditation.

A condition essential, therefore, to the production of a successfully cultivated man is the coincidence of fitness and destiny. I use these terms only in a relative and secondary sense. I am speaking within the sphere of mundane and visible relations. I know there is a sovereign, a spiritual, an infinite, an unseen and perfect Wisdom, by which all existence is constituted and by which it is ordered. In that supreme and invisible plan every life has a purpose, and in ways which no human intelligence can trace, fulfils it. And the purpose of any life in this limitless plan, the most noted as well as the most obscure, it is not given to human intelligence to determine. The fitness and the destiny to which my attention is directed may be manifested in outward indications; and beyond these my speculations do not extend.

The man who is complete in that for which the world wants him seems not only to be suited for his work, but to have had all circumstance suited to him. He is born in the right age of history. The proper spot of earth waits for him and receives him. The household

into which he enters appears best for him amidst all the households of humanity. So perhaps it might not be judged in many a case if we saw the man in the first stages of his nurture ; but so we find it when we can see his life in its issues. A similar adaptation may be noticed in any remarkable man's tastes, trials, and pursuits — in all, indeed, that subserves his training and his experience. It would only be wearisome to follow out these assertions through a series of psychological and historic illustrations. One will be sufficient ; and that I find in the eminent man who has supplied me with my text. In him there was an admirable coincidence of fitness and destiny. In every way he was fitted to be a student and an artist ; and his destiny was all that we can conceive it could be to perfect him in his vocation. Born to comfort and competence, he was safe from the poverty that may chill genius and from the luxury that may enervate exertion. There are passages, in fact, in Goethe's writings from which we might infer that if he had rank and fortune by birth, and with them the refined and æsthetic life which aristocracy has almost by inheritance, he would never have sought that life by imagination. The son of a man who was scholarly, critical, and a connoisseur, of a woman who was large in soul, at the same time impassioned and wise, Goethe was well favored both by blood and by early position. There was every thing that his development could need — care, contrast, incitement, guidance for knowledge, and ideal for aspiration. The city seemed but an enlargement of the household. It was a quiet old German town, bearing the marks of venerable centuries,

active, ardent, and hearty; historical, but not worn-out; practical, but not sordid; proud of its old unconquered independence; proud of its traditions, its chivalry, and its legends. Belonging to such a place as cultivated, quaint, antique, and independent Frankfort was, a mind gifted by Nature had all that it could desire for culture in circumstances. Blessed also with strength, health, and beauty, Goethe had whatever the body could do for the mind, and, whatever arises out of those attuned relations, which a perfect physical and intellectual harmony cannot but establish between the soul and nature, between the individual and society. Full of the power of self-excitement, nothing was a hinderance to his putting of it forth. He possessed, or could procure, every means of discipline and of growth; and this discipline and growth he at no time neglected. He attended to them in every direction, and he continued them to the end. In every direction, too, and to the end, circumstances were in his favor; at each stage of his course fitness in him and destiny ever coincided. In relation to the great events of the world Goethe himself bears testimony to the excellence of his position. "I had," he says, "the great advantage of being born at a time when the world was agitated by great movements, which continued during my life; so that I am a living witness of the seven years' war, the separation of America and England, the French revolution, the whole Napoleon era, the downfall of that hero, and the events which followed. Thus I have obtained results and insight impossible to those who must learn all things from books." If, then, in Goethe we have a most



notable illustration of coincidence between a man's faculties and his relations, we have the no less impressive example of a man who intuitively understood this coincidence, and who, in carrying out his intention, was complete in all that he undertook.

In much of the action and talent of society, however, there is rather a disjunction than a coincidence of fitness and destiny. In this matter the loss or misdirection of eminent power is not so great an evil as the misapplication of ordinary power. No question but that many souls of genius have never been developed. Unlettered barbarism, doubtless, has its Aristotles and Alexanders; and Mozarts and Angelos may have pined away their unheard-of lives in rural huts and in city garrets. That natures of beautiful endowments and of heroic energies have been kept dumb and motionless by ignorance and poverty is not the mere sentimentalism of poetry; it is a conviction forced upon us by the most sober observation of analogy and experience. But, though this be so, society has ever its supply of special genius—supply enough to quicken its impulses and to stimulate its imagination. Special genius must of necessity be rare; and this very rareness is a part of its value. The ministry which it sustains it sustains also by reason of its rareness. And thus it may be that from the wrecks of olden arts and letters we have saved as much as it was good for us to possess. Common life we must differently regard. The vital substance of general society consists of the aggregate and action of moderate endowments; and therefore the dislocation of faculty from its natural adaptation becomes extensively a most practical



injury. It is the occasion of inward and outward incongruity; of loss to the community and of grief to the individual. Though the loss of available labor or the support of idleness becomes a severe tax to society, I yet set it down as a trifling consideration compared with the sufferings of mind which the men must undergo who discover too late a want of due relation between their aptitudes and their avocations. There is hardly a bodily pain or a pecuniary want which I can put against the mortification, the trouble of thought, the disappointment of heart, and sometimes the uneasiness of conscience which must beset a man of sensibility who feels that his work is not the one suited to his capacity. Such incongruities are the most likely to occur in those departments of action into which sensibility will accompany them — those departments that are mental rather than mechanical, and that are connected with the highest culture. In the degree that a man's agency is mental it is necessary that it should be free; that it should be such as has its spring in the inborn tendencies of his being — a work in which action is spontaneity, and not struggle. It should, in a manner, be lyrical; it should be in musical accordance with his predominating endowments. Even if this mental agency is but purely intellectual, this musical accordance is an element of the truest thought; for just in the measure that a man thinks lyrically will he think in an order of coherence and consequence; it is essential in all expression of the moral and religious nature. It was therefore with a profound significance that the Greeks included the culture of all the inward man within the term "music." The best results of mental

agency, then, can only be obtained in harmony and freedom ; and harmony and freedom can only be had by correspondence with aptitude and nature. The incipient clergyman will be better in the pulpit than at the bar, and the born lawyer better at the bar than in the pulpit. Men are sometimes drowsy in sermons that would be cogent in cases ; and, again, men are bewildered in cases who would be potent in sermons. It is a great misfortune for a man to be in either without election of capacity, consent of will, and simplicity of heart. The traditional and social prestige which as yet adheres to mental and scholarly avocations is no common temptation ; it is a temptation by which thousands are overcome and by which a vast sacrifice of happiness and dignity is occasioned. It is a temptation which will lose its power with the growth of social wisdom and which every advance of general education may do something to diminish. When society is wise the individual will stand on his individuality, and not upon his accidents. There may possibly be yet such diffusion of superior culture that the possession of it shall be no longer a distinction, and that, except from individual characteristics, it shall be all the same whether for a certain number of daily working hours a man holds the pencil or the plough, makes baskets or makes books. Nothing would then determine the choice of a man's occupation but the disposition for it and the capacity. But once more to quote Goethe. "Man is not born to solve the problem of the universe, but to find out what he has to do, and to restrain himself within the limits of his power of comprehension."

All that I have yet said refers only to what nature

and circumstances do for the man. This element of expense in the culture of a man comes out of an infinite exchequer. That which I have further to say concerns what a man does for himself; and herein is the personal, definite, and meritorious outlay of culture. In every fact of enjoyment or utility to which a man gives existence by his cultivated agency there is involved a cost to him which we rarely estimate. There is no method by which we can fix the cost of many of the ministries that ameliorate life; least of all can we do it for those in which the labor is impalpable. To this the method of political economy is most rude and the laws of the money market wholly inapplicable. Even reputation, honor, popularity, and fame, as means of reward or as standards of deserving, are unequal, uncertain, and inadequate. A fee does not pay the skilful physician; salary does not pay the truehearted preacher; and so with numerous other offices and engagements in civilized society. There is that of preparation in each which we cannot understand; and in the due fulfilment of each there is that for which we have no measure of recompense. If there is any man in such relations whom mere money can satisfy, he is not worthy of them, and money more than pays him. It is in a pecuniary sense, however, that the individual is least open to temptation who cultivates himself for any office or in it which is not connected with mechanism or business. Wealth is an object which cannot be much before his mind; he cannot always calculate even on support. In the spheres of unexciting and unimpassioned culture, success and eminence themselves bring, in the matter of money,

but moderate remuneration. Gibbon was supposed to have made a large fortune by his History; yet he somewhere himself declares that in the money which he received he did not get within two thousand pounds of what he paid for the books required in its composition. This will serve analogously as an illustration in humble mental labors. The element of cost which the outlay of money can measure has generally but a small return in the income of money alone. The men who exercise callings which demand scholarly preparation have hardly, as a class, a fair interest on the single pecuniary expense at which they have had their necessary training. The remuneration of any culture, away from the immediate and the physical, is, in practical communities, jealously regarded. The culture which connects itself with the most elevated relations of life has never any where found the amplest pecuniary remuneration. This kind of culture must often, like virtue, be its own reward. The talents which secure the most ample and the most ready payment are those which are directed successfully to material gain or those which brilliantly contribute to general amusement. It ever has been so, and probably so it ever will be; so may it be, and so let it be. It is right that men should ever choose spiritual offices from motives not dependent on pecuniary considerations. If a man has a good foot and figure, and wants merely to make money, let him rather be a dancer than a thinker. There is authority for this. When Gil Blas was choosing teachers for the adopted son of Count d'Olivarez, among the candidates for employment came a celebrated dancing master. The interview with this gen-

ius is instructive. "How much do you take per month?" said Gil Blas. "Four double pistoles a month," answered he, "is the current price; and I give but two lessons a week." "Four doubloons a month!" cried Gil Blas. "That is a great deal." "How a great deal?" replied he, with astonishment. "A great deal! Why, you would give a pistole a month to his master of philosophy."

It is not in the money which can be spent by a man or for him that we count the cost at which we have him truly cultivated. *That* is something which money cannot do. The deepest cost of genuine culture is inward; and thus it is whether it relates to faculty or character. There is in this whatever it costs a man to achieve inward independence or to maintain it. This is often a great deal. Nothing, however, is price too much for such an independence; it is the heart and soul, the life and light of purpose and of power. It may seem easy that a man should be authority enough to himself for the simple facts of sense and soul; but nothing is so difficult. Most men lose the consciousness of such facts early, and they never recover it. They become thence involved in forms, in appearances, in artificialisms, in idolatries and imitations; so that at last the real is lost, and the *seeming* takes its place. Thus it is that a man has frequently to disrobe his soul, fold after fold, of prejudices in which custom has inwrapped it before it has any clear discernment or free activity. This, in many ways, may cost him dearly; but he must, at any cost, acquire and hold fast his inward independence. It is only as he has interior freedom and decision that he



can be himself; and it is only as he can be himself that he can be any thing — any thing that is real. It is only in this that a man can have a consciousness of truth that is properly his own; and, if he has not this, life must be made up of echoes, doubts, falsehoods, and illusions. What a man is in his distinctive individuality, *that* he ought to know first of all, and then he may learn as to what he can do and what he can affirm. Once knowing his individuality and its distinctive faculties, he must be true to them; for it is by this fidelity alone that he is simple, determinate, confident, and honest. It is by such fidelity that he can learn wisely, do effectively, and affirm positively; that, like sacred men of old, he can say, “I speak that which I do know, and I testify that which I have seen.” In matters of experience only such speech is to any purpose, otherwise there should be none. We must, indeed, accept of indefinite gradations of evidence and speak from various gradations of belief; but that which we directly assert we ought personally to understand; and it is in the degree our assertion is not only true, but the truth, by our method of expression, made distinctive and impressive, that our words have value. The principle of Descartes’ philosophy, that a man should take nothing for granted, may be unsound in many departments of reasoning; but it is not so in matters of consciousness; and these modify all facts which are facts of life. Whatever I can test for myself I must not declare on the authority of another; and for whatever I should have the witness in myself, I must say only what the witness warrants. Another man’s sight is

not mine; neither is mine his. We look upon the sun; and, though the sun objectively is identical to us both, the reflection of him in the mind of each is different. The sources of such differences are as multiplied as there are human beings, as many as there are thoughts, as innumerable as there are impressions from existence and the universe. Less is another man's knowledge mine than his sensations; less still his passions; and least of all his spiritual emotions. As I cannot be wise with another man's wisdom, I cannot be indignant with another man's anger; I cannot be elated with his pride; his grief is not mine, nor his joy, nor his love, nor his sense of beauty, nor his forms of imagining, nor his ideals of the perfect; and therefore, if I attempt to speak on such things, not as I myself feel them, but as others phrase them, I shall only beat the air and speak with uncertain sounds. It is true that another man's spirit may act on mine, and it may act through his word; it acts nobly and for my good if it stirs my life, if it prompts me to seek for truth, and if it emboldens me to utter it. It acts fatally and for my evil if it leads me to assume experience that is not mine, to counterfeit truth which I have not found, and to speak in sounds for which I have no thought. Whatever influences may affect me, or however much I may owe to them, the spirit must be my own, and so must be the word.

That, therefore, which we must rate for most in the culture of a man is his individual experience. Experience is not merely what a man has passed through, or that to which in his course he has been subjected, or that with which he has come into contact. Much of

incident, of opportunity, may occur to a man, and leave nothing with him or in him but the vacuum of a forgotten dream. That only is true experience which is brought into *vital* union with consciousness in the spiritual organism of a man's own being. I may be in the midst of things, but in no living relation to them. I may be in the theatre, and the play be played; but my eye may be dim and my mind may be cold. I am not affected; the scenery is but a confusion of colors, and the performers are only shadows that flit about the stage. Music may sound, and all that genius can inspire may be in the air I breathe; but my ear may be untuned or deaf; my heart may be callous or sad; and to me it is as a song sung to one lying in a trance. There are men who travel much by sea and land without being enriched by the beauty and grandeur through which for years they move, without acquiring any of the tongues which they heard, without understanding any of the peoples whom they saw; and these men sit down at last with no more knowledge of mankind or of themselves than if they had never left their chimney corners. This solid globe of ours is whirled with the millions of us all in the mighty circle of space around the sun; and through the courses of the stars and of the seasons multitudes of us travel during our scores of years even as a dullard gets over his journey sleeping in a stage coach. Time, space, objects, events are only ours as we can connect them with our personality, and out of its life impart, and to its life attract, *power* according to the sphere of our faculties and activity. The zodiac is traversed in as many revolutions by earth in the space of fifty years for the drone as for the worker;

and in as many minutes as it may require an epicure to dine a battle of Marathon may be fought and the civilization of a race decided. The distance across the Atlantic is the same now that it was a thousand years ago ; but, since then, Columbus has taken it out of the unknown of space, and, in bringing it within the things apprehended and measured, has connected it for power and for good with universal man. Every child witnesses the lid of a kettle moved by the water boiling in it ; but it was the boy Watt that made this fact reveal to him the mysteries of the steam engine. " One event happeneth," as it is written, " to the wise man and to the fool ;" but the oneness goes not beyond the happening, for in result it is as different as the men ; with the wise man it becomes wisdom, and with the fool it becomes folly. The wise man, as the fool, has his mistakes and his misfortunes ; but, while they add to the wise man's knowledge and serve to discipline his strength, they tend only to depress or to destroy the fool. The sufferings, the enjoyments, all the various changes and relations of the wise man's existence minister to his knowledge and his work. A man of inward force and purpose will, when the illusions have departed, turn even his sins and passions to account.

But I would in this remark keep my meaning clear and guarded from mistake. Because sins or passions may be turned to account in the wisdom of experience, I would not say that, therefore, they are desirable or may be indulged. This would, indeed, be a perilous doctrine, and it would be a still more perilous experiment. Benvenuto Cellini was at once a great artist and a great ruffian ; but in general the sins and

passions of Cellini make nothing but the ruffian ; and, while the world has had but one Cellini, it has had ruffians without number. Saint Augustine had been a libertine ; but, though the experience of the libertine is felt in the eloquence of the penitent, it is in cries from the depths of shame, agony, and remorse. But, while Augustine arose in the power of a new spirit and laid bare his experience for instruction and for warning, thousands unnoted perish in their debaucheries. Even some of Augustine's own friends sunk in the waves which he buffeted ; he got safely to the shore, but they sank down amidst the breakers. Time has had no sound of them above the waters but the sad one of their associate to tell of their destruction. And yet I have often met with criticisms which implied that men of genius voluntarily placed themselves in certain positions or accepted of certain relations for the mere sake of the experience which these positions or relations were to yield. I do not believe this, and I cannot. I cannot believe that a man of true genius ever did any thing so false ; for he would well understand that the spontaneous workings of Nature never could be felt in so artificial an adjustment ; he could well understand that the elements of humanity cannot be conjoined like the elements of matter in chemistry in reference to a definite result ; that the elements of humanity are not subject to control, and are beyond experiment ; and, therefore, he would understand that, in human concerns, a mechanical predisposition to be moved would have no more resemblance to real emotion than the sound of a trumpet has to the color of a rose. Genius is not in danger of any such misapprehension ; and it is too sagacious



ever even to venture on a trial which must not only issue in absurdity, but begin in it. But what men have actually gone through may be turned into power; yet, when guilt and wrong are in question, it is not the guilt and wrong which one has done that give him enviable power; the better kind of power is acquired by guilt and wrong manfully resisted and manfully endured. When neither, however, is concerned, there are experiences which train and test power, and to which we owe some of the finest manifestations of genius and character. I am not going to enlarge on that worn-out theme — the calamities of authors; or on that trite sentimentalism — the sufferings of genius: both have been industriously collected, and mostly from the outside of life. The experiences to which I refer are of the inside of life; they are not to be read of in biographies or anecdotes; the result of them is to be found in work, whether in art or action. In all work of either kind which can much impress us we feel that in the soul of the doer there must have been pain and sorrow oftentimes as well as power — always the travail of thought and of the deep forces of the soul. If this has not been so, a man will not stir the forces of our souls; and who moves us inwardly and strongly but he who *can* stir the forces of our souls? Thus the thinker moves us in the demand which he makes on our faculties to master his logic, to comprehend his ideas or his science; thus the poet moves us through thought, through sympathy, through imagination; the man of splendid deeds thus moves us; and so does the man of good ones. Whenever we read a book that searches the intellect or a poem that pierces the emotions;

whenever we witness a drama that fills us with a sense of power ; whenever we hear music that seems to flow from the centre of spirit or of passion ; whenever we look upon a painting that makes us think or upon sculpture that makes us weep ; whenever we are told of a brave man's success or of a wise man's fortitude, — we have generally impressions of seriousness, trials from within their being ; we gaze through their works into their lives, and there behold the throes out of which their works were born. It is not in levity or joy that the thinker finds his philosophy, or the poet his inspiration, or the good man his discipline. Even when their fortunes are brightest, if things otherwise than gladsome had not been in them they had gained no power, in philosophy, poetry, or virtue. Often, however, the power comes up through dark fortunes ; and that it did not sink into despair we owe to perseverance that could not be tired out, to patience that could not be disturbed, or to fortitude which, based on consciousness of faculty or on consciousness of principle, could not be subdued. Who can estimate the effort, the disappointments and the fears, of many an author and an artist previous to his first success ? Yet in that success itself may have been his peculiar trial, his decisive risk ; since elation is ever more dangerous to exertion than uncertainty, and the intoxication of applause more fatal to endeavor than the most depressing misgivings of obscurity. But in the true artist, as in the true man, there is always a conviction that he is in the midst of the immeasurable. He knows that he occupies only a point ; and, gain largely as he may, he still knows that he covers but a point. His humility is

therefore ever equal to his attainment ; but his hope, also, is ever onward in advance of his humility. Thus no success renders him idle or presuming ; for though what he has done may cheer him, it is yet, and always, but a speck insphered in the mystery of existence, with the possible and the illimitable on every side of it. He has in this conviction an invariable check upon vanity, and as invariable an impulse to aspire. And thus it is in virtue, as in art, except that virtue may often be grandest when no outward success attends it ; that the patriot may be most noble in his spirit when he fails in his aim ; that the philanthropist is not less benignant though suffering may continue which he labored to remove ; and the most glorious hour of the apostle and the brightest may be the hour of his martyrdom. In the midst of this immeasurable we are all living ; and that which each of us can take from it and transmute into life,—*that* is experience. So much we snatch out of the unconscious and the impersonal and convert into determinate and spiritual existence. A sculptor lies asleep upon a quarry of marble and dreams a goodly dream of beauty ; but not until he awakes and shapes a piece of the quarry to the dream is his dream of any more purpose to the world than the quarry. And thus are we in this boundless quarry of being. It is by what each of us personally moulds of it to the excellent, the lovely, and the true, that we give our contribution to life and make humanity our debtor.

Culture may, therefore, be regarded as it acts on *faculty* or as it acts on *character*. In reference to faculty we discern clearly its necessity ; and we know that it must be had at the cost of much labor, persis-

tency, and sacrifice. No man pretends that a consummate writer, or speaker, or musician, or painter, or sculptor, or even a good mason or carpenter, is made by rude Nature. As little can it be expected that completeness of character can be had out of rude Nature, admitting that rude Nature is ever so beautiful. Virtue is not science as Plato teaches, neither is it instinct; it is the growth of time and thought, formed by care and conscience, animated ever by aspiration for the perfect. And yet character is more than virtue — character I mean in its noblest sense; for it is ALL that constitutes the personality of the whole spiritual and social man. It is, therefore, evidently absurd to suppose that excellence in character can ever be had more easily or more cheaply than excellence in faculty. The finest artist is a poor result, whether of Nature or of training, compared with an admirable man; and far more frequent and more common are fine artists than admirable men. A man spiritually and socially harmonious — a man with all the best attributes of his humanity rightly ordered and rightly active — is among the things of this world that are the rarest and the most desirable. Not in usefulness only, but in mere enjoyment, the excellent in character are more desirable than the excellent in art. I speak here looking at the entireness of life; for, in the relations that need him, I would have the artist for the sake of his art; and, in such relations, it is only with his art that I am concerned. Speaking, however, of life in its wholeness, it is the excellent in character that cheer and bless it. Not only from them have we those amenities which soothe and brighten the hours that make up the un-

written histories of hearts and homes, but from them, too, we have those sublime manifestations of disinterestedness and goodness which irradiate the gloom of recorded history. It is by the souls of the greatly excellent that we are drawn into highest sympathy with our kind. The latest generations glory in their worth, and no length of centuries causes their brightness to seem distant. When our spirits sink at the doings of cruelty and evil, they gladden us with the thought that there is, notwithstanding, a capacity in man for mercy and the right which never fails of some souls to illustrate its power. *Character*, then, as compared with *faculty*, is preëminently the greater, both as an element of worth and as an element of energy. Who would not, as to worth, be judged rather by his manhood than his art? Who would desire to be called a great painter, but a base man? No; character must be behind the faculty ere we can give greatness to the faculty itself; for, if we know assuredly that the character is mean, the faculty must be miraculous that in spite of this knowledge we can admire. Even in immediate impression the moral is often a greater power than the artistic. What is the most rapturous burst of music to the melody of words that come out from a soul moved by the spirit of compassion? What is the splendor of the most magnificent picture to the look of bravehearted energy with which a generous man becomes eloquent for the poor, the suffering, or the persecuted? Did Shakespeare, even in the mouth of a Siddons, a Kemble, or a Kean, ever swell the breast with more impassioned consciousness than does a mere name sometimes with which a new deed of heroic mercy becomes united?



In solidity of achievement, character is almost every thing. This is true especially in the practical worthiness of the world. It builds up fortunes and it builds up nations ; it conquers Nature and it conquers men ; it gains dominion, it extends dominion, and it holds it. Defect of character is more fatal to achievement than defect of faculty ; for some men have done much with moderate talents, and others have done nothing with great ones. In permanence of influence, too, character is superior to faculty. Character is often a living power of itself ; and, when combined with faculty, it is a living power in the faculty. One pure patriot survives armies of generals ; one true citizen outlives tribes of demagogues. The orator is immortal when the force of manhood is in his art, and his art is immortal because it enables him to express the force of that manhood ; without the manhood the art would be only as the outlines of a cloud which is broken by a shower. It is by the permanence of influence in character that the saint in a man is venerated when the preacher is forgotten. The agitator perishes in the tumult of the hour ; but the reformer which lay *within* the agitator is forever remembered, honored, and beloved.

The most essential cost of attainment is inward ; inward also is its most essential recompense. Such is the highest recompense of faculty ; still more such is the highest recompense of character. In the exercise of faculty trained into mastery there is enjoyment which cannot be told. The man who does not find satisfaction in his work loses the greatest compensation of labor. But of any man whom we can properly call an artist, this is what we can hardly suppose. In

the inspired excitement of his powers the artist has the grandest moments which genius can bestow. No gifts, no tributes, no honors, no applause can have the worth which such moments have; and, when wealth and fame are gained, their greatest value still is in the consciousness or the memory of the inward force that won them. If a man should not win them, yet that inward force is ever his, and only vice can darken its enjoyment. Ere great artists attain to external fortune or celebrity, they must, no doubt, often have supreme delight by means of the faculty with which they are to enchant the world. Edmund Kean, it has been said, insisted that his finest acting had been in barns; and this I can well believe. A natural artist has pleasure in himself and he has pleasure in his art; for his art is the most profound expression of himself; but the artificial artist — the artist that is *made*, not *born*, for his art — labors on that which is foreign to him, and therefore has satisfaction neither in his spirit nor in his work. Not in his work does he find his reward, but in wages and applause. If he miss these his work has left him nothing, and he fails of all for which he labored. When I see one who puts his soul into his art, and who therefore finds delight in the action of his art, because it is the action in part, at least, of his highest and most cultivated life, I see a genuine artist; and, so far as the exercise of his faculty goes, I see in him a true man also — one who in his faculty has a source of inherent and perennial interest; one who is not dependent for his happiness on the works or words of others; one who has faith in himself, consequently hope, likewise candor and simplicity; one who knows that he

has worth because Nature gave him talent and discipline has given him skill; one who is not cast down by the insensibility of the ignorant nor made wretched by the censure of the assuming. But when I see one sick for outward recognition, impatient for notoriety, insatiate for adulation, as sordid at the same time as vain, having no passion stronger than the love of flattery, except the love of money, — in such a one I see not an artist from within, but only from the outside; and though his dexterity may surprise, it does not delight me; for it is void of inspiration, and brings me no power from a new soul. The most genuine artist does not indeed find all his satisfaction in the isolated exertion of his faculty; for he knows that his faculty has not its full action until others are brought within the sphere of its expression. It is to this end that it exists and acts; for humanity in all things is social; and in art, not less than in other relations of humanity, the saying is true, that “no man liveth unto himself.” This again is the reward of the sincere artist as well as of the sincere man, that true power goes out from him and true sympathy comes back; life is put forth, life is returned; in the union of both there is enlargement of his being and enlargement of his happiness. Speaking thus of the artist, I speak within none of those conventional limitations which confine the term to two or three special kinds of refined exertion. I would apply it to the man who brings any form of cultivated talent into distinct action — the poet as well as the painter, the orator as well as the musician, the author as well as the sculptor. If, therefore, the best reward even of those who act on the more immediate

emotions of men is interior, how much more must it be for those who work remotely and away from such emotions ! *They* peculiarly must have their pleasure in the exercise of faculty, else they have nothing ; for to those who spend their strength in the mysterious depths of science and the intellect there never come the revenues of wealth, never the fame of the multitude ; they must have in thought alone its own reward : and truly it is a mighty reward ; for in the mere consciousness of faculty striving after truth for itself, pushing always farther into the immensity of the unknown, there must be a sublime experience, which we can no more compare with the enjoyments of riches and applause than we can compare the essence of the soul with the agitations of the senses. I need not say that the best rewards of *character*, too, are those which are interior — the strength of truth, the peace of duty, the innate beauty of affection, the blessed feelings of benevolence, the holy joy of generous exertions, the faith and hope that live in the inward silence of the heart, and that have consciousness of immortality in their aspiration for the perfect.

## CONVERSATION.

MUCH interchange of word must of necessity pass between men without any interchange of thought. Certain topics must always exist for this purpose which are universal and invarying. A brilliant English journalist once mentioned, in a long article, that all accidents were dispensations of Providence for the advantage of newspapers. One of the arguments by which he sustained his position — and he stated the argument with no less precision than perspicuity — was, that a vastly greater number of accidents occur during the recess of Parliament than during its sitting. The theory was most cogently discussed and most copiously illustrated. We might, I think, enlarge this theory, and demonstrate upon sound principles that some very important phenomena exist simply for the benefit of conversation. Health is one of these. For what other reasons are persons in good or bad health but that mutual inquiries may be made about the matter? Not, to be sure, that the inquiries ever demand an answer; but, then, if health had no vicissitudes, the inquiries could not have originated. You meet your neighbor of a morning whom you saw the evening before, and he is looking as rosy as the rising sun, and you inquire after his health. Now, I ask, if no



man had "invented" health, what would you inquire after? and if you had nothing to inquire after, how could you begin to talk? and if you could not begin, of course you could not go on: and therefore health was "invented" for the good of conversation. We take the contrary of this illustration, and the truth of our theory will be as luminously apparent. You fall in with an unhappy friend who is far gone in the last stage of consumption. It is the close of October; and "you hope that he is well." The object is clear: it is merely to say something. "The weather" is another phenomenon. Two persons gravely state each to each that it is hot, both bearing witness to the fact in rivers of perspiration; or that it is cold, stammering while they say it from the chatter of their teeth; yet, not satisfied, as if there was still not sufficient for conviction, they aver, in corroboration, the venerable testimony of "the oldest inhabitants." Two other topics come after these; and they are politics and the dollar. But, as politics may breed contention, men fall back upon the dollar; and though this dollar in the concrete of life is the centre of contest and envy, in the abstract of conversation it is the centre of agreement and sympathy. The English tongue, it is computed, has many thousands of nouns; but the noun, *dollar*, is more frequently heard than nine hundred and ninety-nine of the others out of every thousand. In street, steamboat, on the railroad, in the stage coach, it is the sound that rings ever in your ear. This noun, dollar, is, indeed, *the* noun — the noun of nouns — the noun substantive, the noun ubiquitous, and the noun omnipotent. "A noun," says Lowth, "is a word which

signifies a thing that can be heard, felt, seen, conceived, or understood." It is long since I was at school, and I quote from memory. In spirit the reference is, I believe, correct; and the spirit is all I want. How completely is the word *dollar*, then, a noun! since all these distinctions united belong to it; for, in sound, idea, and possession, it stands for that which men can best hear, feel, see, conceive, or understand. Other topics we had better leave here unnoticed; though in circles not unrefined they are not deemed unworthy. Those interchanges in which silliness is current coin and in which nonsense pays for nonsense; in which compliment is bartered for compliment and the envy in the heart is measurable by the sweetness on the lips; those soundings of nothings which are but the echoes of empty heads, the miscellaneous chatterings compounded of gabble and gossip which relieve idleness by scandal, — are none of them matters that our subject or our inclination requires us to discuss. Conversation, properly so called, demands for its exercise moral and intellectual qualifications to which these things are abhorrent; and it is with such conversation that we are now concerned.

Conversation ought to be mental music, in which diversity of thoughts in the unity of humanity makes harmony for the soul. Amenity, spiritual and social, is a first, is an indispensable, condition. Propriety is, of course, a first condition — an accordance of mind and utterance with place, persons, time, circumstances, and subject. A march would not be music in a church, nor an anthem music on a parade ground. A chorus from the *Messiah* would not be more discordant in a

ball room than a waltz in a cathedral, and none of them more than the solecisms that are often committed in conversation. Mutual deference is the life of refined communion, a necessary element of intellectual grace. Nor is it only mutual kindness; it is a mutual debt, a debt which every man is bound by his nature to pay, which every man is entitled by his nature to receive — to which the generous heart gives its glad consent, to which the moral reason confers its impressive sanction. The violation of such claims is insolence, and not courage. It is to turn backward for a model — find it in the savage. No man is blameless that does this. In doing so, an ordinary man is impertinent and a gifted man is arrogant. I am far, however, from confining my idea to manners; though courtesy even in manners is a beautiful emblem in the sacrament of social charity. I carry my idea into the spirit. Indeed, only from amenities of the spirit can those of word and bearing come; only in the amenities of the spirit can be found the ties of a living communication. If conversation is an effluence of souls, a mingling of souls, as contact and contrast, then, above all things else, there must be freedom; then must there be confidence — no suspicion, no fear. Suspicion is the palsy of the heart; fear is a chain of ice upon the tongue. Half words are worse than silence; and either is death to conversation. To be genuine, to be himself, a man must believe and be believed; he must trust and he must be trusted. Much of the best charm of conversation consists in the *self-revealing* which is thus prompted. The scowl of a doubt quenches it as quickly as the shadow of a hawk does the song of a bird.

Rudeness in social converse is defect of sympathy; and defect of sympathy is often but the want of imagination. Imagination is the truest of teachers, because it is a living and actualizing teacher. It delivers thought from the imprisonment of one's own personal consciousness, and gives him understanding of others in the spirit and the body of each life. Herein we have the condition of the widest sympathy; for what is sympathy but to feel away from ourselves and to realize what passes in the breasts of others? Men meeting thus in the fulness of comprehension could not cant or cavil, for they could not be so mean of soul. They could not mistake or misinterpret, for the intention at least would be understood; and with ingenuous minds it is the same thing to *know* and to be just. In concerns of intellect, in matters of thought, to be just is to be tolerant, and to be tolerant is to be gentle. A large discourse of reason is not more foreign to distrust, to captiousness, to onesidedness, to bigotry, than is a large discourse of imagination. The origin of many spiritual vices will be found more frequently in the want of fancy than in the want of conscience. More fatal still to grace of conversation is a sharp and unscrupulous intellect. The moral atmosphere about such a man is a vapor that bears infection along with it, and which either irritates or sickens those who breathe it. The man of such an intellect is a gladiator who desires only to fight. Cunning, indeed, he is of fence; master of his weapon, and merciless in its use. It is the sword of a spirit, but not of a holy one; sharp to wound, and often sharpest to wound the unoffending.

The love of truth is the spirit of all lofty converse. The love of truth is the grandest aspiration after the grandest object. By no other spirit can men be more sublimely animated, and in no other spirit can they more humanely come together. Let their opinions, then, be as many and as opposite as may be, there is no danger of ill will. This love of truth is root to all the charities. The tree which grows from it may have thousands of distinct and diverging branches; but good and generous fruit will be on them all. This love of truth is a bow of peace, ready for every concession that is honest, firm against every compromise that is not. This love of truth is the noblest stimulus to inquiry; ardent to seek, yet patient to examine; willing to communicate, but more willing to receive; contemptuous of petty curiosity, but passionate for knowledge. This love of truth is the life of all philosophy; it is that which germinates in meditation, which grows into science, and which brings a new shape of being into the universe in the birth of every discovery. The love of truth is the spirit of all eloquence. Speech without it is but babble. The mere art of rhetoric is more noisy, but less useful, than the tinman's trade. But when the love of truth fires up the passions, puts its lightning in the brain, then let men give heed, for a prophet is among them. This love of truth is the strength of all heroism. That cause alone is worthy which is eternally right; and he alone is worthy who, in devotion to the right, defends it. It is such a spirit that clothes the martyr with a flame which outshines the blaze that kills him. This love of truth binds the



soul to all true spirits on earth, in heaven, and to God — *the* Truth, perfect and eternal. Compare emulations of argument, pungencies of sarcasm, dazzlings of fancy vain of its glitter, pride of logic, and pomp of declamation with the simple thoughts which the love of truth suggests, and they are but as the sound of an automaton to the voice of a man.

Reciprocity is the just law of conversation. Truth, confidence, honesty in speech is the moral realization of this law. But it has also an intellectual realization. Intellectual reciprocity is according to the amount of suggestiveness. This exists in the degree that living words are spoken and that living minds are present; for life meeting life ever gives forth new life. Thus each person is active and passive, at the same time imparting and receiving. In conversation, mind should impart and should receive inspiration. Of all forms of speech, conversation is that which is poorest without inspiration; it is that which must have inspiration, or it has nothing. In other modes of speech simple instruction may be of decisive value; and information which we need loses nothing of its value by the dulness of its statement. But in conversation, mere instruction is no proper object; and, when made an object, is impertinent and insufferable. Other modes, if possible, are worse — disquisitions that choke attention; declamation that swamps thought in the waveless Dead Sea of its muddy monotony; topics insisted on that nobody cares about; facts amplified that either all know or that are not worth knowing; propositions demonstrated which admit of no question, or

if they do, have no value when resolved. Such modes are barren. Barrenness is around them and barrenness is in them. No seed do they contain, and no fruit can grow near them. Of some you hear the remark made, that they can talk like a book; but like what sort of book can they talk? Is it like any sort of book with head, or heart, or nature in it? If the silent books were really like these talking books, one should confess that Sultan Omar did in Alexandria a work of great mercy for the world. The sultan was no doubt taciturn, and not much of a reader. Perhaps he had some viziers or imaums near him of correct and tormenting fluency, who, as the learned told him, "talked like books." "Bish millah," he might have thought; "the more books I destroy the better;" and so that which has been always ascribed to him as a work of barbarian bigotry may have been one of benevolent compassion. No; the talkers that talk like books are mere sentence makers; syntactical machines, rhetorically constructed, that grind out phrases as a barrel organ grinds out tunes. Mere sentences are but forms of words. It is spirit and truth that make forms of sound words; but sound words with as little form as can be are the best. Articulated voice that has nothing for the mind is even wearisome to the ear. That which fills both ear and mind is articulated life. He who would have life in his speech must have regard to his life. It will not live *by* itself nor *on* itself. Reading and observation must feed the mind; meditation and reflection must change the food to substance.

*Life* in conversation implies variety. It embraces the greatest possible diversity. It excludes nothing

except what is vicious, ignoble, or ungenerous. This, indeed, is the glory of genuine conversation; nor the glory merely, but the characteristic, which distinguishes conversation from prattle or from prosing. Whatever can excite attention, attract interest, or move sympathy, it deals with; not methodically, but magnetically. One topic multiplies and diversifies itself as it passes through independent minds; ever a new topic, and ever yet the same. It may change; but it changes like the changing of a strain. Let the spirit of the hour not be violated; let the unity of sentiment be not broken. Art, literature, nature, travel, anecdote, adventure, science, gossip, can all be used to enliven and delight. The heaviest matter of an encyclopædia, passed through the mind of a glowing and plastic fancy, comes with shapely newness out—a genuine coinage of brilliancy and beauty. Such a fancy can easily take the lightest matter in a “circulating library,” condense it into solidity, and put the stamp on it of true value. All things are available in colloquialism but dulness or ill nature; the one may be pardoned, even tolerated; but no amount of talent should save ill nature from social excommunication. And this is not intolerance, but charity. Conversation puts no restraints upon honest opinion except such as good feeling and good sense do of themselves maintain; and these are sufficient. Every faculty has in conversation both sphere and stimulus. No understanding is too deep, no memory too retentive, no imagination too grand for the conversational circles of the civilized community. In the close and small group, not less than in the wide arena, there is urgency for power and room for great-

ness. It is of peculiar interest to observe in conversation the different countenances, with their ever-varying changes, whether of action or impression. The forest painted by the sun and moving to the wind is a fine object; the hollow sky is august to the upward gaze, nor less so to the downward look, given back in the mirror of the sea when you stand in the centre of the sphere and seem as a king in the midst of the worlds, with the glory of heaven above your head and beneath your feet; yet are these, or aught that is outwardly mighty, grander than the human face in its soul-moved mutations? Is the shade on the hill or the light on the flower nobler or more lovely than the calm of thought on the manly brow or than the blush of emotion on the cheek of woman? Are any potencies or appearances of outward nature so truly a shrine of God, or do they give so sublime a reflection of his divinity? Watch this human face — afflicted, joyous, softened, impassioned. Watch it when struggling to conceal a rapture or a misery that is too sacred for the common eye. Greatest of all, watch it when subdued in the holy calm of charity and faith; then you know that, full as creation is of power, its incomparable grandeur is that of man. This it is, and not the outward creation, that taxes forever all the energy and genius of painting; to this, in all efforts of the grandest art, outward creation is subordinate and secondary. In conversation we see the educated face as we see it in great pictures, great orators, and great actors. If we have not its aspects of concentrative energy, we have more than an equivalent in the endless versatility, in the vivid alternations of mood and meaning, which conversation elicits. Thus eye, ear,

and mind have their appropriate gratifications. Singly and grouped, human figures and faces, speaking and listening, changing ever as Nature prompts, give to the eye successive pictures of unstudied grace in position and expression, not the counterfeit of humanity wanting the life of humanity, "but the true and perfect image of life indeed." And never is the deep, strong voice of man, or the low, sweet voice of woman, finer than in the earnest but mellowed tones of familiar speech, richer often than richest music, which are a delight while they are heard, which linger still and still upon the ear in softened echoes, and which, when they have ceased, come long after back to memory like the murmurs of a distant hymn. O, it is a very pleasure to listen to such voices, accordant with lofty conceptions and sweet humanities — the soul breathings that now swell with daring imagination and then sink into the gentleness of sadness or of pity. I have heard such voices, voices that were music *from* the soul and *to* it — the very melody of thought, and of thought that was the very soul of goodness. Beautiful conceptions sang along the syllables ; beautiful feelings came trickling from the heart in liquid tones. Very pleasant are such voices — pleasant on the fragrant air of a summer's evening, pleasant by the fire on a winter's night, pleasant in the palace, pleasant in the shanty, pleasant while they last, pleasant to remember, even with sorrow, when they are silent — when their melody shall never, never again attune and sweeten the common air of earth.

A peculiar interest in conversation consists in the free play of mind. Each mind can act with other



minds that are different, and be better for the difference. In the conversational circle there is an office for the thinker, for the muser, for the poet, for the wit, for the humorist; and even the punster has his use. The best office in it is that which the various genius of woman fills. Here at least she may exercise her power; and with great and eminent service to society. Here her influence comes into contact with none of the polemics about her rights or her wrongs. And let no one think the sphere mean or subordinate. Eloquence the most impressive and the most lasting is often heard in it; and, taking liberty to refer to my own experience, the eloquence which has sunk the most deeply into my own feelings and memory I heard in conversation, and not in the pulpit, the senate, or the popular assembly. If we leave the general social circle and come into the region of intimate affections, what heartfelt eloquence do they often speak, without rhetoric, or show of oratory, or pomp of words! Listen to some loving wife who is pleading with her misguided husband. What looks, what streaming tears, what persuasiveness and pathos of intonation! How perfect is it, and how pure! What are your theatres and your senates, your courts, your logomachies, and harangues to their home-felt power? And why is this a power? Because it is the heart that speaks; because it is Nature in the heart. All the sacred eloquence of home is conversational; and most of such eloquence is woman's. I have heard a ragged mother, after years had passed over her affliction, bewail the death of her soldier son with a grandeur and an agony that would have made the best acting of Mrs. Siddons appear as mouthing and mere rant.

But these cases are too solemn to be used as illustrations. I have seen two wild peasants on the mountain side, who, in boldness and grace of gesticulation, in dignity and force of utterance, would have been both admiration and despair to a Kean or to a Talma. In genuine conversation, Nature is less constrained than in set orations. Public speech is not often eloquent; for not only does it generally want the higher nature, but common nature. Mr. Macready asserts that the diseases in the throat to which clergymen are subject arise from the use of feigned tones and the wearing of starched, white cravats. But this is not the worst; nearly all of us, of whatever profession, use feigned tones in the voice of intellect, in the voice of conscience, and wear starched cravats on the necks of our imaginations.

Conversation fulfils several offices in social and individual culture. Conversation gives impulse; and impulse is a continual need of mind. Isolation tends to indolence; it begets inactivity and revery, and it may end with incapacity. The motion of the mind is not more than any other motion self-originated. It is not perpetual. Were it even perpetual, that would not be sufficient. It would be but of one kind and in one direction; but it needs to be of many kinds and in many directions. Like all other motion, it requires power from without to begin, to continue, to change, to complicate, to vary it. Meditation will not answer, for this throws us on ourselves; and often the inertia of our minds is such that we cannot meditate. Reading will not answer; for books are nothing when the mind is passive. Ideas in books are like objects

in a prospect which a dense fog covers. Their glory is a blank until the sun melts off the vapor. Light and heat from the soul must pour themselves over the page before it shines with a living splendor. Mind must have the active and present contact of mind to arouse it, to provoke it to exertion, and to shame it out of sloth. But in the mere presence of humanity there is power; and, independently of all excitement, this social magnetism of social intercourse calls out our mental energy and adds to it. The moral impulse of conversation is yet more valuable than the intellectual. Brooding discontents it shivers to small dust, and then it scatters this dust upon the air of pleasant words. It dispels the melancholy which solitary thought engenders; it casts out with its fine human exorcism the fiend of self-contemplation, which seclusive habits invite and worship. We find in conversation a variety of wholesome impulses. We find them in sympathy that cheers us and we find them in praise that encourages. We find them in coincidence of opinion that strengthens our conviction or in the dissent that sharpens our sagacity. We find them in new thoughts from familiar minds and in old thoughts from strange minds.

Conversation is corrective. It is corrective of opinion. No other method of comparison is more favorable to truth. But in this view I separate altogether conversation from controversy. The uncurbed expression of free minds differently constituted and differently trained, and looking each from its own point, brings a subject into full elucidation. In council, not in combat, each brings to bear on the matter under view the

best ideas that he has and in the best manner. Withdrawn in a great degree from the temptations that surround public position and formal speaking, thoughts come forth as each conceives them, and words are ready for the thoughts. We can hardly imagine any circumstances better suited for a fair intellectual result; and this result is yet more valuable in self-culture than in social culture. Nothing is better than conversation as a corrective of self-sufficiency. In educated conversation a man soon finds his level. He learns more truly than from books, in converse with living men, to estimate his powers modestly and justly. A book is passive: it does not repel pretension; it does not rebuke vanity. Indeed, reading and study become to many but the nurture of conceit. If some persons value themselves on the books they own, it is not surprising that others should value themselves on the books they read. As knowledge grows on the thoughts in books, so pedantry feeds on their words, and is proud, poor, lean, and solitary. In conversation a man is not long in discovering that he alone does not know every thing, and that, though *he* were to die, wisdom would not perish with him. He quickly discovers that, though his mind is to him a kingdom, it is not to others a cabbage garden; and that, were the lightning to scath it, men would not look for the day of judgment; nay, they would hardly take notice of the blank. Some in their especial circle are taciturn. They are choice and chary of their ideas. Such ideas as theirs, so grand, so lofty, so altogether mighty, they consider as too precious to be wasted in the passing change of life. *They reserve them for state occasions.* They have

worked for them; and they suppose the price is to be estimated by their labor. But we all know that there may be much toil and small result. The mountain in travail with a mouse has long been a commonplace fable. But a molehill might fancy its groanings were the gestation of an elephant. There are persons who are as grim in their silence as if the "integral and differential calculus" was in every wrinkle. Their ideas they esteem, not as pebbles, but rubies; not to be placed in vulgar exposure, but to be safely locked up and sacredly kept out of sight. But bring these things imagined by their owners to be such gems, — bring them into the great market of thought, and they will not have even the currency of cowries. A boy writing from school to his mamma was reminded by his companion of something that he seemed to be forgetting. "O, no," said the other, with impressive dignity; "*I am keeping that for a postscript.*" Not unlike to this, an idea, or the ghost of an idea, not the tail of a thought, but the tail feathers of a thought, must have with many a special reservation. The journalist says, "Ha! I'll keep *that* for an article." The parson exclaims, "A capital subject for a sermon." Conversation dissipates all such nonsense. It brings words to the test of sense — of common sense, of impartial sense, of independent sense. A man learns that what he considered a great idea may be no idea of any sort; that what seemed to him an originality is but a dying echo; that what he esteems an ornament of graceful novelty may be but as the sole of an old shoe which a traveller has dropped in a desert and which an African savage finds and wears as a decoration; that



what he admires as a flower native to the soil of genius may be from the seed of a wornout plant which has been rejected from the garden of every cultivated imagination. In conversation, intelligent men, comparing themselves among themselves, exercise mutually a silent but a faithful criticism, which, though just and candid, is not indulgent; which, though not indulgent, is not ungenerous; and which does as much to cement a brotherly companionship as it ministers to mutual improvement.

Conversation, while correcting the mind, enlarges it. We share in the fruits of other minds, and of minds more productive than our own. The power that comes to us from without strengthens the power that is within. A man's thought is original by the peculiarity of his mental constitution. So far as he has a thought at all, it must, in some sense, be a thought distinct from every other man's thought. It is shaped in the mould of his individual intellect; it is colored by the atmosphere of his emotional and moral character. A man's thought is shaped by the peculiarity of his personal history, mental and otherwise. He has thus an experience, memories, feelings, and associations through which none but himself have gone. All these are more or less involved in any word that a man can truly bring out of himself — any word that is the transcript of a soul-grown idea. The most honest man, the most simple-minded man, will often fail of this distinctive utterance in methodical composition and set speech. The individuality of his idea, of his being, are diluted into verbiage, or they become lost in the misty haze of commonplace. Conversation permits him to wait for the right word, and supplies the unbidden inspiration

that can speak it rightly. Thus you gather in from every side the realities of mind, the realities of life. The poorest leaves with you something which might have been loss not to have acquired. This and all such acquirements enter into experience. Experience consists of feelings and knowledge transmuted into life. Memory and observation gather in the materials; imagination and reflection work the transformation. Every region of apprehensible existence supplies materials, but in nothing as in human character are materials of such value; and, in conversation, human character most undesignedly reveals itself. Other men studied from our own position; ourselves studied from theirs; the world contemplated alternately from both: these, I take it, are the elements of experience; and in conversation we have them all combined.

The term "conversationist" is, I fancy, a barbarism; but, for the want of a better, we must use it. To those who influence their fellows without formal preparation custom has accorded the name of conversationists. The most preëminent of these we may class under two divisions — "talkers of society" and "thinkers aloud." In the English tongue, I suppose we must place Samuel Johnson high among the "talkers of society." He was abundantly furnished in all the dispositions and accomplishments that qualify a man to be a great talker. Strong minded and strong hearted though he was, he hated to be long alone; and, though pugnacious and self-willed, he looked for sympathy and he loved society. Indolent by constitution and averse to the labor of composition, expression in some way was a necessity to his vehement and teeming intellect. Reading al-

ways and reading every thing, thinking with a constancy and versatility equal to his reading, his reflective faculty turned all to use, and his memory lost nothing that was available. With his sound, piercing, vigorous understanding; with his fancy, quick, bright, and ready; with his hosts of words, effective in the heavy forces and the light; splendid on parade and invincible in battle, — he seemed to be in one person the Goliath and the David of conversation; strong to wield a spear that was as a weaver's beam, and nimble to whirl a pebble from a sling. We have in Johnson a most wonderful talker, as flexible as he was mighty. Let the day of labor or of languor close, trim the lights, stir up the fire, gather around this Samson of the social mind the circle of his companions, then stimulate him with provocation and suggestion: his soul, moved by external contact, increases in its own action until all its powers are brought into majestic play. In direct contest, the stand was short which any opponent made against Johnson. But, though Johnson overcame his antagonists and overruled his associates, he did not create silence. Silence, indeed, would have been fatal to Johnson. His was the genius of concentration, not of continuity. His genius was more the genius of debate than of soliloquy. He needed interlocutors, if only to meet the dramatic conditions of the dialogue; and some lights, though dimmer than his own, to keep the space through which he darted from utter darkness in the intervals of his flashes. Not the only speaker, yet the chief speaker, his supremacy was not wearisome. Though on occasions his behavior was overbearing, yet his resources were so opulent, his com-

mand over them so direct, that, whatever failure there might be of amenity, there was none of interest. His sharp and decisive logic; his brief and bold retorts; his illustration, as sure to its mark as the rifle ball to the centre of the target; his quick and discerning criticism, meeting every turn of thought and taste; his sage remark; his rapid metamorphosis of a trite saying into a striking truth; his unexpected extraction of a great moral from a common fact; his apt quotation; his anecdote, sometimes grimly droll, sometimes tenderly reminiscent; his eloquent melancholy; his grand pathos, — formed a genius of colloquial power that was all his own. His contradiction was often more than rude. His wit, if strong and daring, was occasionally so merciless that in such instances we look in vain for the Christian, or even for the *man*. His personalities were frequent and savage. Still these qualities, disagreeable though they were, did not nullify his better ones. All his thunder, all his terror, could not conceal the gentle heart of charity that lay behind in deep sky of his merciful humanity.

Madame de Staël was one of the most brilliant talkers in a brilliant talking society. Different from Johnson in being French and a woman, in most other respects also she was different. She was highly imaginative and artistic. With some glimmering of German philosophy grafted on French vivacity, she was mystical and sentimental without being either superstitious or religious. Dr. Johnson, in the poetic sense, had little imagination: of art he knew nothing; and, from defects both in sight and hearing, of it he could know nothing. Doggedly English, he was

pensive and melancholy without being in the least degree sentimental; and, though both religious and superstitious, he was not mystical. The doctor talked with individuals properly as such, and one at a time: the lady talked to an audience; and, if an individual was addressed, it was merely as a seeming before the audience and for it. This most unhappy individual was singled out from the company as a soldier is singled from the ranks to be their flugelman. But, while the military flugelman is estimated by the rapidity and precision of his movements before the regiment, De Staël estimated her conversational flugelman by his passiveness before the company. A story is told about her, which, no doubt, is a joke; but it illustrates the impression of her character. In order to test how far her talk was unconscious monologue, her friends at one time placed a mute beside her. She addressed him the whole time, and afterwards expressed herself with rapture on the elegance of his manners and the profoundness of his remarks. Dr. Johnson did not merely need a presence, but a presence that gave him an excitement; De Staël needed nothing but the presence, and the excitement she supplied herself. Dr. Johnson had not continuity; De Staël had it without limit. There seemed no reason why she should ever stop except by the loss of strength or the loss of life. But the lady's foibles were more amiable, as became her nature feminine, than the doctor's. With all her foibles, she was glorious as a woman and glorious as a woman of genius. Eloquent, wise, and strong as the most gifted men of her age, as burning in words as its most renowned orators, as soaring in imagina-



tion as its most daring poets, she had all woman's instincts — all woman's instincts in their weakness and in their worth. There seems to have been in no heart a richer treasury than in hers of human love, indestructible and incorruptible ; nestling with woman's fondness in the bosom of near affections, but not there bounded ; capable of going upward and abroad — up to the heights of great purposes, and out through the spaces of great sympathies. This love was young with her to the end — as young when, with tears upon withered cheeks, it flung the light of lofty praise upon her father's grave, as when in smiling girlhood it bound her to his neck. And wherever the brave struggled with the bad, wherever oppressed liberty put forth its cry or raised up its hands, wherever wrong or sorrow lay upon humanity, her soul was moved towards it ; and, whether in the written book or the uttered word, her soul rushed towards it with all her affections and spoke for it with all her zeal. Without a trait in her nature, little or ungentle ; wayward, but most amiable ; sincere, sensitive, loving ; a goddess when on the Olympus of composition, but, like all of Homer's goddesses, a very woman still ; the friend of talent, the benefactor of want ; as full of generosity as genius, — nothing but moral ice or mental mud could the bolts of her electric speech have failed to set on flame.

Sir James Mackintosh had not the condensed logic of Johnson ; he had not the rich fancy of De Staël. But he did not browbeat like the one and he did not monopolize like the other. Abounding in graces of kindness as well as in treasures of wisdom, he accomplished

what neither of the others could. He so transferred ideas to the minds on which he brought his own to bear as to leave them ignorant of their debt. He made them suppose that the ideas were their own. He was the converse of a pickpocket, with all the skill of enrichments which that ingenious individual uses for impoverishing. He put wealth silently into the mental pocket, which caused the one with whom he conversed to feel big, and rich, and fancy that he himself had made it. His was the noblest generosity; that is, mental generosity. Mackintosh is to be reckoned among the *thinkers aloud*. Deeply studied in all the moral principles and phenomena of man in the various aspects of his being, he gave out his wisdom freely — he gave it as it came from that calm and humane philosophy which his large intellect had collected and which his warm heart made living. But perhaps, after Socrates, we may esteem Coleridge as greatest among these thinkers aloud. He had not the practical directness of the sublime sage. He could not, I apprehend, go as the great Athenian did, with his deep-searching words, to the workshops and to the market-places. The keen, consecutive ratiocination, broken in seeming, but irrefragable in spirit, which distinguished the Grecian thinker, was not found in the English one. Nor had the English thinker that perfect method of dialectics which the Grecian had — that method, calm, passionless, unswerving; to error as the scrutiny of a soul-discerning spirit, and to sophistry as a resistless judgment. It was not the property of Coleridge, as it was of Socrates, to exhaust a single position and to grapple with individual minds; but, like Socrates, his influence was by thoughts cast

near at hand and carried far abroad. Like Socrates, his influence was oral, yet profound; sown among his contemporaries, but bearing fruit to his successors. Like Socrates, he was a teacher of teachers. He was a teacher, not so much by the communication of knowledge as by leading men to feel their ignorance, by stimulating in them a spirit of inquiry, by driving them back upon principles, by bringing their souls into contact with the mysteries of existence, and by holding up to them the infinite loveliness of truth and virtue. Coleridge did not possess the Socratic intensity and unity of intellect. He could not so join the positive and the polemic; but he could, as the ancient seer could not, so combine the reason and the imagination, both in their divinest spheres, that philosophy was music and thinking became a song. As he advanced in his speculation, the imagination bore his reasoning upward, until the logician was the lyrist and thought was beauty; and both, one in truth and one in poetry, swelled out the tones of his eloquence to the rhythm and the measure of an inspired rhapsodist.

I have said enough, I trust, in this essay to show that I mean by conversation no pedantic, no stilted, no sentence-making barter of words, but a free, generous commerce of genuine minds. I esteem nothing as conversation, socially regarded, that is not of the occasion, easy and spontaneous. Elaborateness is detestable; and, if any man has the appearance of being elaborate when in reality he is not, then he is to be pitied; for he will be charged with a great fault when he is only afflicted with a great misfortune. Cramming beforehand for talk is a crime, for it is a preparation

to torture; and, being done with malice prepense, it is worthy of all condemnation without benefit of clergy. Prearranged jokes are worse than treason. Manufactured wit is as guilty as conspiracy. Formal argumentation deserves the summary extinction of rebellion. "Whences and thences," "wherefores and therefore," have no more business in Christian conversation than Aristotle has in the list of Christian saints. Syllogisms, like swords, are laid aside in modern intercourse. An offhand pun may be endured, sometimes it may be enjoyed; but a disciplined punster is intolerable, as great a pest as a popular air, even as Old Folks at Home, on a barrel organ or on a penny whistle. "Conversation," some one may say, "as thus described, requires special gifts and no small culture." Not so; it is true that I have illustrated my topic by its best examples; these do not exclude, but imply, gradations. Genius we cannot look for in social intercourse; for it is a rare thing among men, and is often shy of words that must be spoken to a listening circle. We may not look for peculiar endowments in social intercourse; but we may for a pure, a humane, and an intelligent spirit. Indeed, in the exercise of gossip, of censure, and much of very good-natured calumny, there is often the exercise of considerable talent. A subtlety and force of analysis is frequently employed on a neighbor's character that would have solved a problem in science, opened a knotty point in law, cleared a dark corner in history, or mastered the grammar of a difficult language. In this exercise we may notice instances of spirited individualizing and of very distinctive character painting,

which, by the execution, would win our admiration if the *animus* of it did not forbid us to be pleased. The inventive faculty is seldom sluggish in it either, nor is the ratiocinative; and arguments from analogy, arguments from hypothesis, are pursued with such ingenuity, and made so successfully to supply the want of *facts*, that, if used in scholastic universities, they could not fail of the prizes awarded to senior sophisters. This, to say no worse, is a notable waste of power. The *personal* in conversation is always dangerous; for the *individual* can seldom be safely subject to conversational criticism. Such criticism scarcely ever ends but in causing harm to both its agents and its objects.

Conversation has, as I have said, gradations. Simple it may be, and most familiar; but no method of presenting thought admits of more dignity or permanency. Much of the most enduring literature has this form. The finest parts of the best fictions are the conversational parts. The whole substance of the drama, both in tragedy and comedy, takes the conversational form. With a true instinct of fitness, there is no thought so deep or high which might not in this method find expression, and there is no place where it might not be uttered—in the store, in the workshop, in the field, in the steamboat, in the stage, or on the railroad. The great olden sages gave out their philosophies without parade. Socrates taught wherever he could interest a listener. He taught because he did not seem to teach. It is true, there is authority in wisdom and virtue which in all places gives them propriety and power; but this is an authority which every honest



and thinking man may in his degree possess. Still, if we carry this view no farther than these examples, they are sufficient to show the dignity which the conversational method can claim. Conversations held on the waysides of Judea and in the streets of Jerusalem scattered the seeds of a new life in the world. Conversations held with laborious men on the shores of lakes, in the bosom of the lonely mountain, went forth as a resistless power; they swept off thrones, they dissolved empires. The whisper of an eternal idea broke the sceptre of Rome and crushed the might of the Cæsars.

## WORDSWORTH.

THE mind of Wordsworth worked mainly within the limits of personal consciousness and personal experience. In this Wordsworth was different from Shelley. Shelley was in all his faculties impersonal. The very being of Shelley seemed to be ideas imbodyed in the flesh. His language is as if it belonged to some region of abstract thought before it became subject to the limits of an incarnate individualism. Sense, memory, reason, imagination, in Shelley, burst all the limits of personality and found scope only in the boundless. The life of his genius was in the universe ; and whatever circumscribed thought was to him a falsehood or an evil. This powerful tendency coming early into resistance, not with the circumscriptions of mere nature only, but also with the strong embattlements of historic beliefs and influences, made him a rebel and an outcast. Intellect, pure, piercing, inquisitive, exacting, aspiring, far-reaching, was the dominant power in the mind of Shelley. It pressed him ever upon the barriers of the known, and it rendered him impatient within the circle of the knowable. Into contact with existing things he brought ideas of the unconditioned and the absolute ; and, as facts in every direction clashed with these ideas, his genius worked only in the void or in the

struggle of a hopeless contest. Yet this would not have been the case but for other elements of his mind. Had it not been for the poetic imagination, his intellect, without conflict with the actual, would have expatiated freely in the region of the speculative; and in that region it might have exhibited the subtlety of a mediæval schoolman or the continuity of a modern German; it might have rivalled the metaphysics of an Aquinas or a Hegel. Even with the poetic spirit, had it not been for the zeal of humanity, this wonderful intellect and imagination might have taken form in an unpolemic poetry — a poetry that would have been as positive as it was sublime, the grandest union that the soul of man has yet imbodyed of the logical, the emotional, and the ideal. But it happens, by an extraordinary paradox of genius, that Shelley's poetry is the most gorgeous, yet the most abstract; the most intellectual, yet the most luxuriant; the most remote from common experience, and yet the most offensive to common belief.

Such was not the action of intellect in Wordsworth. His intellect was, indeed, as living, and, in its way, it was as far from common things; but still it was personal. It lived, indeed, as in a measureless universe, but was a universe of which its own consciousness was the centre. It lived as in a great kindred of humanity; but it was an humanity estimated from the point of immediate and personal contemplation. The intellect of Wordsworth had no mighty range of speculation. It wanted saliency and impassioned boldness; and this was not because it was conservative, for the intellect of conservatism may be as startling as that of

innovation ; it was because it was individual and inward. It was not like that of Burke, which found a new philosophy for old authority ; it was not like that of Coleridge, which found old authority for a new philosophy : yet the intellect of Wordsworth was as little commonplace as any man's. It started no theory except one of life, which it constantly falsifies ; and one of poetry, which it utterly disregards : for the rest, it was content to labor in the deepest quiet and within the range of its own experience. Yet the intellect of Wordsworth was no more coincident with the common actual than was that of the daring and discursive Shelley. It dreamed as his did ; but the dream was not so wild. It was nearer to the home, and it had more affinity with the visions, of ordinary mortals. It was in dream that Wordsworth had the soundest mind ; it was in it that his deepest wisdom lay ; and it was in it that he was most himself. It was when he dreamed he was most alive ; at least he was most in that life which most awakens life in others. It was in the dream of gentle thought that visions pure and good came up from his heart into his imagination, in which the beauty of the affections was made lustrous with poetic splendor ; but assuredly it was not in such a dream that he wrote his sonnets on capital punishment.

The intellect of Wordsworth was not greatly enlarged by scholarship. In this point, at least, it was not Miltonic — a designation which, in other respects, is often applied to it. It was not enriched, as Milton's was, with treasures of all story and all thought ; it lived not, as his did, familiarly with the olden gods, and with the consciousness that all the mighty past

was its memory. Neither was it varied with rare and curious learning such as decorated the mind of his friend Southey; nor was it filled with quaint and genial reading such as delighted the soul of Lamb. The amount which Wordsworth appropriated from the stores of wealth that elect genius has left humanity was only meagre. It contained no ample contribution from classical antiquity, considering that the poet was a man of regular education; it had no gatherings from the dim, mystic, and wondrous East, and none from the visionary and ideal erudition of myriad-minded Germany. The intellect of Wordsworth was as little scientific as it was scholarly; and, much as he loved Nature, it does not appear that any of the natural sciences charmed him. We do not learn that he took interest in astronomy, geology, geography, botany, chemistry, or any other systematic form under which the understanding classifies the phenomena or facts of matter. In this respect Wordsworth was a genuine old Hebrew. The universe was to him an unbroken whole. He did not divide or analyze it. His society with Nature was not *study*, but communion; not a notation of appearances, but an intercourse of spirit: he did not examine it in its laws, but felt it in its life. Were it not for this entireness of Nature in Wordsworth's apprehension of it, — therefore his feeling of its unity, vitality, and infinity, — Wordsworth's idea of the universe would have been as circumscribed as was his scholarship. But such could not be the case with a man who held the relations which Wordsworth did with Nature. He saw not much of crowds; he went but unfrequently abroad; he spent his life with the



girdle of mountains and lakes around him ; the same neighborhood and a few faces were day after day present to his sight from manhood to old age ; but in this limitation of objects and space there was nothing to set limits to his thoughts. Nature is immortal and continuous in its life ; it is without restriction in its compass ; whatever spot we stand on serves as the centre of immensity ; whatever hour we live in as the dividing point of the eternities. No matter how small the space on which we dwell or on which we move, Nature is always large to mind ; it raises no barriers against thought and it puts no stoppage on emotion. A young girl in a silent Scottish glen about the hour of sunset, meeting Wordsworth and his sister, said, in replying to an inquiry of theirs, “ What, ye are stepping westward ? ” This to most persons would seem a very ordinary expression ; and so it was ; but it laid hold of Wordsworth’s imagination, and *there* it became most suggestive and most expansive. Commonly that which to general minds had nothing became to his the most fruitful. He found hidden import in the phrases of unthinking speech, because he looked under the phrases for those native instincts which take no heed of their own utterance ; he found subtle truth in words, in forms of words, which are often expressed without the intention and listened to without the suspicion of a meaning ; and sounds that scarcely stir the apathy of sense had for him secrets of life which he was ever vigilant to seize and bring to light. The brief expression of this rustic girl put his spirit into action ; it unbound his thoughts from local space and gave his soul an impetus into the great *beyond*. The illimitable, the infinite,

in the universe as the sphere of man seems to have been suggested by the maiden's words. The suggestion came in this instance from a voice ; but Wordsworth would have found a like significance in a flower, in a cloud, in the gleam of a star, or in the ripple of a stream. The elementary in human life, as the spiritual and articulate portion of Nature, as the heart of its mystery and the utterance of its struggles, was *that* into which the intellect of Wordsworth the most profoundly entered. His thoughts on man have often a deep, a most affecting, and a most wonderful music in them. The melody of them belongs to the innermost whisperings of the soul ; and it must be listened for in patience, reverence, loneliness, and silence. There is tenderness in such thoughts and in the speech and tones of Wordsworth. They are full with the pathos of the moral life ; to borrow from himself a phrase, "the still, sad music of humanity." But there is no less strength in them than sweetness ; for they include the grand as well as the lowly of man's existence and destiny. But Wordsworth could not discern or represent man individually. The story of a life or action, with its own distinct and inherent interest, required a concentration of attention on the person, a separation of incidents from principles, and the art of making facts, without reference to their spiritual associations in the experience of the writer, reveal their own meaning, and in that meaning produce the intended effect. All this was foreign to the mind of Wordsworth ; and therefore Wordsworth could not *dramatize*. With whatever state or stage of humanity Wordsworth is concerned, his attention is fixed on the inward and the

universal: that which is made visible is for the sake of that which is not seen; and that which is but seen in part is intended to suggest that which pertains to the essence of the whole. Peter and James, in the mind of Wordsworth, are not separate and concrete men; they are rather parts of abstract MAN. They cannot, therefore, be positive characters. They have no distinct integrity of being; they have no indivisible personality. They are indications, not individuals; and they exist for the sake of what they imply or what they illustrate. They have no independent value in themselves. They are not as Othello or Falstaff, Parson Adams or Bailie Jarvie, that have in their walk and conversation their sufficient reason of existence. In the region of ideal objects these characters obtain an actualized, a determinate, appointment and destiny. It is not intended that the mind shall go beyond them, but stop at them; it is not intended that the mind shall examine all around them, but be entirely content within them. In themselves they hold a complete life; and we inquire nothing further and we ask for nothing more. It is not thus with the men of Wordsworth. Peter and John, as he presents them to us, are not of interest, I repeat, for what they are, but for what they signify. They stand for foregone conclusions in the poet's mind; and these conclusions infold sublime and impressive truths, if we have but sympathy and philosophy to find them out. Peter and James, no doubt, have distinct relations to suffering or action, or they would be mere names devoid of all meaning and all use; but the suffering or action has its interest, not from its connection with Peter or James, but for its

connection with humanity. And in this incidental remark I have stated most completely the difference between the moral and the dramatic. In Wordsworth the moral is perfect; the dramatic does not exist at all. That in which men are the *same* is the basis of the moral; that in which they are diverse is the basis of the dramatic. But it is with the common only, and not with the *distinctive*, that genius can work when it philosophizes within the sphere of its own individual existence. Every man has in himself the elements of all men; and when a man has a deep and thoughtful genius he can find in himself infinite illustrations of things common to all men. If, however, he would have, not illustrations, but individualities, he must go out of himself; his creations must be unmistakable personalities, alike distinct from the idiosyncrasy of his own character and from mere specifications of abstract humanity. But though Wordsworth was his own study, he was not an egotist: he looked within himself for the essentials in which he had community with his kind and connection with the infinite. The immeasurable idea, or the undeveloped possible, Wordsworth discerned within the limits of the actual. With him "the child is father of the man," and the man the child of the immortal.

It is no part of my design to complicate these remarks by any disquisition on imagination in general, or on Wordsworth's imagination in particular. The philosophy of imagination has been abundantly discussed, and criticism has left little to be said on that of Wordsworth. Imagination, as all grant, is an essential faculty in every mind of decisive originality. Without it



no man can be a great thinker, a great inventor, a great constructor, a great ruler, nor even a great fighter. The presence and activity of imagination are implied, then, in Wordsworth's originality: the *kind* of imagination is determined in his being a poet; the degree of it, other energies being sufficient, is manifested in his being a *great* poet. Imagination in the poet, in addition to the power it exercises in the mind simply, has a special fulness of life — of life *concentrative*, in the spiritual intensity of his own soul; of life *diffusive*, in the universal sensibility, in the pervading consciousness, in the depth of meaning which all things have in his apprehension of them; of life *communicative*, in the fervor, the inspiration, and the force which he imparts to such spirits as he brings into sympathy with his own spirit. That Wordsworth had copious wealth of this life, — that in its concentrative, diffusive, and communicative potency it thoroughly vitalized his genius, — the least candid student of his poetry must feel, must confess; and therefore, in relation both to the quality and the quantity of it, his place is in the highest rank of poets. But to trace this life through the modifications and peculiarities which render it distinctive and Wordsworthian, even if it were not an unnecessary task, forms, as I have said, no part of my design. What was the habit of mind which governed Wordsworth's faculties, which acted through them as a law of unity — the habit which harmonized into one life of soul the universe of matter and of spirit, social affinities and isolated thought, and which transmuted into poetry the whole experience thus resulting, in all its subtleties and in



all its range? What, I inquire, was this dominating and determining habit of mind? It was not passion; that is, *passion* in the sense of tumultuous energy or of craving desire. Wordsworth's mind was serene in its action and his life in its relations. No more fitting term than *serenity* can we find to designate the character of his mind and life. But serenity implies much; it implies calmness, light, and order; and these, in a high degree, belonged to such serenity as pervaded the inward and the outward existence of Wordsworth. Spiritual heat, strength, and purpose it implies also; and, so far as passion through these centres its power in the soul, Wordsworth had passion, as every man must have who acts on moral thought, emotion, or imagination. But it was not in him, as it was in some, an electric fire, which in a moment flashes out of darkness, and in that moment kindles a quenchless light or creates an immortal beauty. It was not, as it was in others, an impetuous struggle of the spirit to find sufficiency in things out of, or foreign to, itself, turning back upon itself at last in the song of grief and the wail of disappointment. Glory Wordsworth neither despised nor coveted; of fame his own self-consciousness made him certain or independent; to luxury his temperance rendered him indifferent; and for wealth he had no such desire as ever moved him to exertion. Such, however, seemed to compensate him for the long unsalableness of his works; and, though his poetry would have left him to starve, kind friends and good fortune enriched him with ample competence. Listless, like most men of genius, to plant, to sow, or gather in the field of Mammon, he was careful, as most men of genius are

*not*, to keep, and not to scatter, that which the care of others had put into his garner. Nor had Wordsworth passion in the sense of any might of zeal or eagerness of aspiration. He had none of those agonies of soul with which largely susceptible natures have to contend, and through which, in a stormy discipline, they work their way to peace. He had none of that overflowing enthusiasm which so often agitates great hearts, bewilders the noblest heads, and for a time disorders the holiest, the wisest lives. He never lost himself; he had no sublime excess. The dream of pantisocracy, in which he shared the illusion of Coleridge and Southey, was with any of them but a doze; and Wordsworth was the first to awake from it. His brief sympathy with the French revolution was a mere mistake; and the discovery of his error gave him a shock which he did not recover from for the rest of his days. It was as if a person should come in ignorance close to the torrent of Niagara while it was hidden in the mist, and find the terrible might of the cataract where he expected only the freshness of a shower. The revulsion and reaction were such upon the mind of Wordsworth that every movement was afterwards abhorrent to him which the popular element invigorated. He fell back into stringent and restrictive conservatism, centred himself in recluse retirement, and became strong, if not intolerant, in sentiments and tastes to which many modern tendencies and agencies were ungracious and repulsive. No transition from the old shone to him with promise for the new; innovation boded only threatening; and his social faith had no hopes behind the shadows of his fears. The growth of popular influence disturbed

his ideas of government ; the aggregation of effort in many plans for general improvement offended the inwardness of his moral feelings ; the despotic predominance which mechanical forces, as he apprehended, were to have in civilization, was at once hateful to his spiritual and his æsthetic inclinations. The most applauded manifestations of the times, mental and material, alarmed and annoyed him. Infant schools he disliked, because they interfered with domestic affections. Towards the Bible Society he was cold, because it tended, as he thought, to produce “ an unnatural alliance of sects.” Manufactures disturbed his poetical associations, and railroads destroyed the picturesque. But, seeing that much of the future must be created by these agencies, our hope for good to the future compels us to believe them better than they were esteemed in the philosophy of Wordsworth ; and this hope, which the logic of his philosophy might rebuke, the spirit of his poetry sustains.

The genius of Wordsworth had no dependence upon sympathy. Wordsworth was not adhesive ; neither was he attractive. He did not attach himself personally to individuals. In very boyhood he had no heart companionships. In that season when the mind is the most social and the most confiding, his spirit dwelt alone. At no time in his course did he share his thoughts with others ; and none dared to ask him to partake of theirs. Out of his domestic circle he had but few intimates ; and even these seem to have loved him rather with the affection of devotion than with the affection of freedom. A recluse by temperament and circumstances, his correspondence was of necessity limited ; but within its closest

range it is measured, dry, and cold : such, at least, is the general character of the letters which have been made public. In one instance of great and unexpected grief in the loss of a shipwrecked brother, and in other near afflictions, the heart speaks out, and natural sorrow asserts its privilege of tears and utterance. Yet no man ever gained a more loyal devotion by his words than did Wordsworth. When his writings were scouted and ridiculed, when his reviewers almost outnumbered his readers, and when every reviewer was a scoffer, there were, in private, young and burning minds who took his side with heroic sympathy, who gave themselves to his cause with the enthusiasm of loyalty, and who brought to him an admiration unquestioning and unqualified. Looking at Wordsworth in these relations, one is amazed at the force of his stoicism, stoicism in both the stoic aspects — strength on the one side and impassiveness on the other ; for, while he presents an unshaken calmness to his critics, he is startled into no gratified surprise by the ardor of his friends. Strong and self-sustained, he stands between them both ; and he is neither disturbed by the obloquy of the one nor exultant in the homage of the other. Yet his were circumstances in which much less devotion might move the strongest man and win from him the recognition of a gratified heart without discredit to his self-respect, his independence, or his equanimity. The great soul, indeed, has not its power from without, and it is not depressed or elevated by every caprice of censure or applause. Its power is in itself ; it is strong in the centre of its consciousness, and it holds a kingly firmness equally to blame and censure. Still there are



times when adversity and injustice that cannot shake it will overcloud it: the smile then of a generous face shines as a star in the gloom; the mind's eye brightens with the gladness of its light and hails it in the beauty of its rising. The will, mighty in the sense of virtue, can bear itself firmly against neglect, can meet unmerited contempt with lofty patience; the judgment, assured of worth in that which as yet the many do not understand, can wait calmly for the equity of time and thought; but still the heart will bound lovingly to the good word of the generous, and be ready to welcome to its affections the man that comes boldly and single minded with his tribute and waits not for the multitude. There were some who came thus to Wordsworth; but so it does not appear they ever moved him. Alone in the midst of scornful criticism, studious in a solitude that was never awakened by the voice of public applause, working on from year to year without profit and without praise, the strength in Wordsworth of insensibility to his admirers is more wonderful than his strength of fortitude against his opponents. Many of these men became subsequently distinguished in the commonwealth of letters; but it does not appear that Wordsworth recognized them with any literary sympathy. Indeed, with respect to intellectual and imaginative sympathy, if the spirit of cultivated humanity were as that of the bard of Rydal, the sphere of literature would be that of poetry — the sphere of poetry would be that of Wordsworth: then, if poetry were not to cease, Wordsworth must be the poet to every man, or every man must be a poet to himself. There is one thing that may be said of Wordsworth, — and it im-



plies no little grandeur in him of whom it may be truly said, — that all the praise he had came to him without his seeking, and that, hard as the path was on which he travelled to his fame, he tried to smooth no step of it by the smallest bribe to any man's self-complacency.

Some space back I started an inquiry, and left it there unanswered. The intervening reflections by which I have postponed the answer have been intended, not only to lead to it, but also to render it more distinct and definite ; for it has not been my purpose to criticize in its wholeness the genius of Wordsworth or to survey at large the workings of his poetic faculty, but to determine, if I could, that in the action of his mind which constitutes the poet's peculiarity. And thus we come back to the inquiry : Through what process or mental habit was so much genius in this man unfolded ? How came the transmutation of the life of this man into poetry — into poetry grand, and full, and permanent ? How was so much wealth brought out from a man so seclusive in his temper, so confined in his position, so unexcitable and so unexpansive ? I answer, simply, that the genius of Wordsworth was developed by meditation — by meditation which in all his waking hours was continuous as breath itself, and which, by susceptibility that was ever fresh and by inward thinking that was ever active, was infinitely suggestive and creative. This mental habit stood to him for travel, for throngs, for reading, for wide discourse with men, for all the means by which other minds that obtain special influence discipline their faculties and gather their experience. To a man

of Wordsworth's meditative power, the space on the surface of the earth with which his visible presence is connected is nothing in the sphere of limitless being with which his soul is always in conscious relation. The geometer needs but a line between no very distant points to form the base of a triangle which will carry his demonstrations to the stars; and the moral thinker needs but a definite range of nature and humanity in which to find all the principles and problems that mystery and eternity can suggest. These principles and problems are involved, indeed, in all that he can spiritually contemplate; and there is nothing that he cannot so contemplate. They are in his inward and in his outward life; in the speculations and the fancies, in the fears and in the delights, that busy his brain and agitate his breast; in the story of his home; in the changes of his fortune; in the relation of *his* part to the drama of society, to the drama of humanity, played here upon an earthly stage in the midst of the immense and the immortal. These problems and principles are in the universe, in time, in space, in matter, in permanence and change, in decay and renovation, in life and death, in light and beauty that gladden hearts with the joy of love, in force, in fate, in vastness, in the terrible, in the boundless, the dreary, the immeasurable night in which thought is lost, and faith affrighted, and the soul cries aloud for help from the depths of her distress. Man has his soul every where; and, if he is but awake to its intimations, it is every where to him a source of endless revelations. Properly, life is vigilance of mind; and all facts and all objects are instinct to the living mind with the spirit of thought

and the impulse of emotion. The life thus quickened by meditation in a man himself causes him to apprehend in every other a correspondent life. The essentials of this life he recognizes in every man in whom he recognizes a conscious humanity; he discerns within him the elemental faculties that animate and glorify his own existence; he beholds him, as he himself is, in the midst of the infinite, and bound to it by like relations. Every man, as such a mind will view him, is a member of the vital whole of our great humanity. Every man, too, in the philosophy of such an inward thinker, is a part of that sublime order of realities with which the senses deal not; and thus every man he looks on has a grandeur and a worth of being infinitely above the conditions of animal and visible existence. The limits which bound the steps are no limits to the thoughts; the horizon that shuts in the vision of the eye has no circumscription for the vision of imagination; and the power that exhausts the capacity of doing leaves unexhausted and inexhaustible the capacity of loving. As intellect transcends motion, as imagination transcends sight, as aspiration transcends execution, so love is greater than deed, image, or idea, as it is love that imparts to deed, image, or idea its life, its grandeur, or its beauty. No mind, therefore, can be straitened that is gifted with the ability and the disposition to meditate, and in whose meditation reason, imagination, and affection unite with the peace of virtue and the love of truth. As it never can be deadened in itself, as it never can be separated from humanity and the universe, it can never fail of the best excitement and of the most worthy interest. To Words-

worth, then, the remoteness of cities and the absence of throngs had nothing that he could regard as loss. Around him were the lakes and mountains ; above him was the sky ; and as to the visible in Nature, what more could he desire ? Form and hue, with untold variety in their changes, he had, as magnificent and as lovely as he could have had on any space of equal measure beneath the sun. With these forms, hues, and changes his mind was ever mingling ; and with such intensity of sympathy as he had with them, with such constancy of observation, they presented to him combinations which none before had noticed, and he drew from them meanings of which none before had conjectured. He was rewarded by Nature for his vigilance by appearances which others had not seen ; and he was rewarded also by Nature for his thought in the discovery of analogies between his spirit and all things with which his spirit held communion of which others had never dreamed. There was no varying shape of cloud which he was not quick to note, and there was no shape to which cloud varied that did not bring new images to his fancy or suggest new ponderings to the moral reason. So he was with all things, and especially with things that feel. The insect, the bird, the brute spoke all to his intellect and his heart ; and he lived among them as beings that with himself were creatures of God and sharers of life. There was, too, in every human spirit, as he esteemed it, a depth unfathomable, a world illimitable ; and therefore there was none so mean as to have a story without sublimity. What more, then, did Wordsworth require, what more did he need, than his hillslopes, his dells, his valleys,

and his cottagers? In the one he found the fulness of Nature, in the other the essentials of humanity; and through his meditative communion with both he found for himself, and he gave to others, imperishable treasures of sensibility and wisdom. If we would know what depths of wealth Wordsworth had in meditation, we have but to take a hasty glance along his poem of *The Excursion*, and then to read it attentively. In our hasty glance it will appear meagre, bald, and mean; in our attentive reading it will be rich to fulness. As the eye runs carelessly onward, an account of an idle lounge among the hills attracts its notice. This lounge meets with a Scotch Presbyterian peddler: they become interested in each other and fall into gossip. Through a number of summer hours they are wonderfully companionable; they interchange mind with mind; and to this hasty view much of what they say will appear prosy moralizing. A solitary comes across them in their intercourse — a man to whom experience and knowledge brought only disappointment. The three join together in more talk. When the talk is exhausted they separate; and thus the drama closes. Nothing more barren is conceivable; and here and there, when the mind is as superficially connected with the subject matter as the eye, nothing appears more ridiculous. Read attentively, read with thought and sympathy, read with the inward nature awake and active; then this outline is filled with the profoundest moral cogitation and wonderful picturings of beauty — with impressive ideas of man as he lives in himself, in society, as he is related to the Eternal and the



Unknown. So studied, the poem interests the reason by its speculations, the fancy by its imagery, the heart by its narratives; it excites the whole man by all in him that is spiritually noble, until he feels a bigger life than he fancies could have ever panted in the grandest of the olden gods — a greater life, indeed, because making itself felt in the consciousness of mysterious and immortal being. And what is the difference between these two aspects of the poem? It is that one gives us but the naked outlines of the poet's notes, and the other gives us the action of the poet's soul; that in the one we have only his marks, and in the other his meditations.

As in *The Excursion*, so in most of Wordsworth's other poems, we discover the elements of his power in the depth, the continuity, and the compass of his meditative energy. Wordsworth has no inventiveness in incident, and he has no variety. He has no progressive movement in action, no concealments, no excitation of amazement, and no stimulus of curiosity. The supernatural he discards, and in the strongly impassioned his attempts are failures. But go with him below the surface; stop not in the symbol, but pierce to the idea; and then he is revealed to you as a soul of rare poetic and philosophic insight. He has a wonderful discernment of the human spirit in its most remote and most inaccessible experience. Who has entered as he into the mysteries of childhood? I do not adduce as evidence of this his extraordinary poem *On the Intimations of Immortality in the Recollections of Childhood*; I would refer to his interpretations generally of childhood. Simple childhood, — who can

know it? To look on the child and feel what to himself he is; to give the child back to the mind of grown maturity; to restore the first age of life to advanced experience; to recover it and bring it clearly into view from beneath a chaos of artificialisms which have overlaid it, — this it requires a most rare faculty to accomplish. It is that mysterious sympathy in which the prophetic seems included in the poetic faculty. Actual childhood not many can conceive. Most persons have absolutely lost their own; and of the outward signs which mark it in the young before them they have forgotten the inward import. It is to them a mere illusion, lying far back in the dimness of memory, and falsely as well as obscurely reflected through the long and changeful vista of years and passions. It is for this reason that the speech of the mature about children seems generally to children but foolishness: to them it is unreal and untrue — unreal to what they feel and untrue to what they know. Speak to a child what he feels to be a reality and a truth, he is at once affected and impressed; but so to speak to the child's deepest consciousness belongs to the most purely wise. To understand, then, the spirit of childhood is the gift of special souls; and it was the gift of Wordsworth.

The meditative energy of Wordsworth's genius gives to his poetry its pervading inwardness, as it gave to his mind its inflexible self-consciousness and to that consciousness its independent individualism. The inherent force of his poetic faculty was to him in its mere activity an affluent inheritance. In full possession of his soul and all things made living by

his soul, he had the abundance of a great content. This was the substance of a settled peace, which was securely his, unconnected with the accidents of fortune. The passion for fame did not agitate his calmness, but rather made it deeper by the strength of a supreme and majestic patience. Wordsworth could at no time have been indifferent to money or applause, for during some years he was poor, and there is no man who does not desire encouragement; yet the absence of both neither depressed his spirit nor slackened his diligence. He abated no jot of heart or hope, but worked along in the quietness of inward power and in the serene faith that something in his work was destined not to perish. Considering how needful sympathy is to the sensibility of the poetic nature, it is not easy for us to comprehend Wordsworth's increasing productiveness in spite of coldness and silence. And now that we have the secret things of his experience in his Memoirs, we are made aware that this coldness and silence were beyond any general idea we had formed of his unpopularity; though beyond that it seemed hard to go. But still he forsook not what he regarded as his mission. Subjects arose to him; he brooded them into poetry; and he had no doubt that their birth was for immortality. The assured way in which he spoke of poems which none would buy or read had once an air of the ludicrous; but now we can see in such confidence an element of his greatness. After many years, a hundred dollars would exceed all the money which his poetry put into his purse; and this was in a time when poetry was a passion with British readers. Never had the literature of imagination and emotion more glory and more gain. Campbell sang a pleasant song, and had

thousands of charmed listeners; Scott was a wizard; Moore was a bard; Byron was a demigod. Even Crabbe, harsh and harrowing as his stories were, attracted numbers to his dismal narratives. Pay came with praise. The income of Byron from his works was princely; the revenue of Scott was imperial; and any of the others whose share was the least ample still felt that the Muses were not ungenerous. But Wordsworth walked alone in Cumberland without a cheer from the public or a bank check from the booksellers. Wordsworth bore his trials manfully. His meditative concentration kept him from distractions and desires that might have maddened a weaker man; it sustained him strongly in himself; it preserved him from irritating comparisons; it gave him knowledge of his special powers; it made him master of them; and, in revealing to him sources of confidence unconnected with popular caprice, it became a spirit of immovable self-reliance and self-respect.

In this peculiarity of Wordsworth's genius, to which our attention in these reflections has been directed, we may discover the elements of some of Wordsworth's failings. One failing of his was an inordinate self-appreciation. He was so intent upon his own thoughts as to feel as if *they* constituted thought itself. His art was so much his life that he almost mistook Art for his personality, and spoke as if in him alone Art had worthy action. Nature in the same way seemed *his*, and *he* her only poet. He lived with her so constantly, so observingly, so lovingly, and so long, that Nature meant *his* consciousness of her. He was the *me*, and she the *not-me*, of all poetical existence. His

intellectual habits tended to strengthen this impression. His own mind and that which could be made directly the object of it were the only factors of his genius. What *other* minds had done or were doing entered but little into his genius and but little modified it. His was a spirit that accepted nothing from others, and rejected mediators. He cogitated by himself and for himself; and his method of composition, which was entirely mental, must have intensified his inward isolation. As he had never gone to secondary sources, and exceeded most men in faithful watchfulness of outward phenomena, it is not surprising that Nature should have enriched his mind with truth, freshness, originality, peculiarly in imagery and description. No one could be so much with Nature as Wordsworth was, even if he wanted the poetic temperament, and not observe and feel a great deal which escape the indolent and the insensible. But still Nature was not given over to Wordsworth alone. His imagery, indeed, is true; but so is that of others: it is also original; but not less so is that of many who did not spend all the time which he did in the outward world. One man may catch in a minute what another may miss through the twenty-four hours; nay, that which one man *does* catch in a minute, another *would* miss for all eternity. Each man according to his being receives what he can enjoy and use—one by rapid flashes, another by slow ponderings; and the soul kindled by a flash may burn with as fine a lustre as that in which the fire has long been smouldering. The fire that flamed in the soul of Wordsworth was sacred, but the heaven from which it was caught was not for him only;



and many as well as he had their lips touched with live coals from off God's altar. Wordsworth had a solemn idea of his office; he regarded it as consecrated; and he was right: but at times he alludes with such emphasis to his mission, and expresses such an awe of his own genius, that we cannot repress a smile: the smile is only prevented by reverence from becoming a laugh. The worship with which his heart is inspired is deep; but he celebrates it as if he were a solitary priest. Poetry with Wordsworth meant *his* poetry; and poetry was his life; it was his past, his present, and his future; it was his memory, his possession, and his hope. Wordsworth was, therefore, so filled with his poetry that he talked of it, he recited, he read it; it was his authority, his argument, and his illustration. Another failing of his is so plainly implied in this that I need only mention it. He was insensible to the merits of other poets. For his contemporaries, at least, he showed no enthusiasm. Had the public the same feeling of these contemporaries as Wordsworth had of them, none of them would have been more popular than he was himself; and, if they were overvalued by the crowd, they were as much undervalued by the poet.

The meditateness of Wordsworth's genius accounts for the slow growth of his poetry into favor. Meditation is not in itself attractive. Few enter into it spontaneously. Meditation requires that men pierce into their interior selves; and this is what men in general will do only upon compulsion. It is what they delight to be kept from doing; it is what innumerable contrivances and inventions of pleasure are intended to keep them from doing; and it is in this preventive

influence that such contrivances and inventions have the reason of their existence and their value. Seeing that all which makes man's nature great is spiritual, seeing that all which excites the spiritual in man is that which renders him conscious of his greatest life, we might suppose that none would be so especially honored as those who appeal to man through his highest faculties. But so it is not. The pleasurable instincts are the most accessible; and the nearer a man comes to these with a perfect talent, the quicker his reward and the larger his audience. The buffoon, in this respect, is before the wit, the dancer before the sculptor, the singer before the poet, and the story teller before the thinker. The spiritual, in its inward import, is only known in another as it is known in one's self — by patient, thoughtful, even toilsome culture. But in the very process of this culture there is some hinderance to true insight into another man's mind. One finds out ways afar from the beaten tracks, and he loves to pace them; he has discovered hidden spots; and, as his own discovery, they have charms for him. Truth he has sought with strong desire and lonely toil; the fine connections by which the mind binds itself to latent sympathies of outward being he has formed in the recesses of his own memories; the images and similitudes by which the soul gives bodies to its ideas in the shapes of Nature are moulded in his own consciousness by affinities that are individual and independent. It is hard for such a person to break through his habits of isolation and enter fully into the life of another mind. In order to do so, he has in many things to train his faculties afresh. To readers like these Wordsworth

was a new lesson ; and even these would not readily begin to learn it. From the mass who had shunned all deliberative culture he could but slowly win perusal ; for the acquirement of reflective habits is not a discipline that many would think of beginning in the reading of a poet. Although some of the profoundest thought which the human mind has ever reached has expression in English poetry, yet the poetry with which the public was the most familiar in the time of Wordsworth was for the greatest part instinctive and impulsive. The poetry of Cowper was obvious and gentle ; that of Burns was intense and simple ; that of Scott was romantic ; that of Shelley was not tolerated. The poetry of Byron was fierce, fiery, and passionate ; and what Byron wrote that was reflective lost in popularity in the degree that it *was* reflective. Wordsworth's poetry was meditative ; and, as such, it was too remote for the instinctive tendency of the age and too calm for the impulsive. Merely as meditative, it had to overcome that apathy of mind which shrinks from the toils of thought ; and, as meditative with many peculiarities, it had to overcome those preconceptions which make singularity hard to be understood and those prejudices which render it repulsive. As it went down into the hidden things of life and nature, the superficial lost it ; and, as it often turned aside into strange by-ways, it sometimes escaped even the reflecting. The symbol always demanded study, and frequently the idea might be missed. An incident of individual experience was occasionally linked by subtleties of association to a general law ; the incident, with the poet's feeling of it, appeared in the verse.

Many who read the verse did not apprehend the latent implication of the law: the incident then seemed silly and the feeling childish. The critics took advantage of this, and, either in mistake or malice, turned it to laughable account. But still minds grew into Wordsworth's poetry, and the poetry grew fruitfully into minds, until its seeds bore richly on the soil of genius and also bloomed in many a flower on the waysides of common life.

## ROBERT BURNS.

IN a cottage on the banks of Doon, near the town of Ayr, in Scotland, in 1759, Robert Burns, one of the world's sweetest poets, first saw the light of life. The peasant child soon learned to know existence in toil and sorrow. Torn at an early age from study to labor, grief went hand in hand with glory through his remaining years. We find him amidst the wild eccentricities of an irregular youth without any settled aim, as he himself declares, but with some stirrings of ambition that were only as the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops around the walls of his cave. With characteristic ardor, and with more zeal than wisdom, he mingled in the theological and political squabbles of the times, and, by the destructive boldness of his satire and the shafted power of his ridicule, created many enemies whom it was easier to provoke than to propitiate. Nor must we hold him blameless. In the prodigality of wit and the wildness of laughter, in the madness of merriment and the pride of genius, he treated opinions and persons with an unsparing levity which a more thoughtful experience would have taught him to regard with reverence or forbearance. That his genius went too frequently in company with his passions, and that the glory of the one was sometimes wrecked in the



delirium of the other, it is not allowed us to deny; but these follies had their penalties; and, if it were possible, they were better now forgotten in the ashes of his early grave. Burns was a man that sinned and one that suffered; but he was not a man that sinned callously or that suffered meanly; and it is not for the living to write in marble errors which the departed repented in tears.

Incidents of romance and anguish checker the opening of his poetic fame with sadness as well as sunshine. His Highland Mary, the love of his youth and the dream of his life, is wrenched from his heart by death. Then comes the melancholy episode of his attachment to Jean Armour, with its heavy retribution of wretchedness. His name has begun to gather honor among his native hills; the small provincial edition of his poems is hailed with proud enthusiasm; but yet, with poverty and a bleeding spirit, he looks across the ocean to foreign exile. Suddenly his purpose is turned aside, and we behold him in Edinburgh among the exclusives and magnates of the land. There, as at the plough, we find him still the true and sturdy man. In the throng of Highland chieftains and border barons, in the full blaze of pride and beauty, he felt within him a humanity beyond the claim of titles: genius had given him a superscription more impressive than device of heraldry: the patent of nobility was written with fire in his heart, and the proud ones of earth recognized in him the aristocrat of heaven. The wealthy marvelled at the inspired peasant; and, wherever the eloquent ploughman appeared, there were the nobles collected together. Dukes gave him their

silken hands ; duchesses received him with sweetest smiles ; earls pledged him in the wine cup ; and, for the moment, the haughty and the highborn recognized the presence of a greatness superior to their own. But Burns was not a man to hold popularity long in circles such as these. He was too stoutly individual for the apathy of elegant mediocrity and he was too sternly independent for the sensibility of patronizing grantees ; he saw nothing to venerate in a title when it was but the nickname of a fool ; and he was undazzled by a star when it glittered on the breast of a ruffian or a dunce. But, though Burns escaped the danger of aristocratic delusion, he did not escape the danger of aristocratic feasts. These were the times of nightlong carousals and pottle-deep potations. Burns had neither the firmness to resist such dissipation nor the constitution to endure it ; and he carried from it impaired health and impaired habits — an irritable discontent with his condition, and an instability of purpose fatal to a life of labor. Having placed a tomb over the neglected remains of poor Ferguson the poet, he retired to the country, shared his success with his brother Gilbert, met his mother steeped in tears of honest joy, married his Jean, and gave peace to a wounded spirit.

From this era of light in his course — from this day, bright with fame and conscious virtue — we trace him along a path devious and clouded. We follow him through the toil of a profitless farm to the struggles of a country gauger, and from these to a destitute death bed. In all his follies and his sufferings we behold him true to a manly nature, loyal to noble principles ; and,

however seamed and deformed may have been the surface of his life, virtue remained unshaken in the centre of his soul. With a large family and only seventy pounds a year, he had an open hand for the poor and a hospitable roof for stranger and for friend; and although he died owing no man any thing, yet he has been stigmatized as a prodigal and a spendthrift. He gave the world his immortal songs without money and without price; and, with the generosity of benignant genius, he sympathized with every effort of the humble men around him for a nobler life, he ministered to their intellectual wants, and he aided their intellectual struggles. Accordingly we observe him, at a time when he was harassed with cares and overcome with toil on a barren farm, establishing a book club in his neighborhood, forming its rules and directing its operations. To estimate this in the true spirit, we must remember that it was more than sixty years ago, when as yet there had been no mechanics' institutions in the land and when lyceums were not, when cheap editions of standard works had not arisen even on a printer's dream, and societies for the diffusion of useful knowledge were infolded, as the poets say, in the mighty womb of futurity. Dr. Currie, of Liverpool, a genial and eloquent though patronizing biographer of Burns, in narrating this portion of his life, questions the utility of literary studies for the great masses of the people. Strange questioning this in a life of Burns, the cottage boy, whom the little knowledge of a rustic school awakened for eternity, raised from the clods of the valley to a place among the stars, a burning and imperish-

able light, and who, but for that little knowledge, might have been as nameless clay as any that nurtures the grass of a village churchyard.

The ideas of Currie have almost vanished with his times ; still even yet we occasionally hear some small-souled cynic, some snail-shell philosopher, who thinks himself of those sages with whom wisdom is to perish, sneer scornfully at popular knowledge. Popular knowledge, it is true, is not the wisdom of Solomon ; it has not the depth of Bacon or the sublimity of Newton ; still, so far as it goes, it is good, and, though the pedant may deride, the philanthropist will rejoice. And what, after all, is the ground of Mr. Pedant Wiseacre's pride ? Perhaps some learned investigation on the contraction of the Greek *kai* or the tail of the Greek *gamma*. Seriously, the critic and the scholar, when true to their noble office, deserve our admiration and our gratitude ; but those who grub merely for withered roots which never produce either fruits or flowers, and then, with insect vanity, give themselves airs of scorn, are themselves saved from contempt only because all creatures have their uses. It is well for society that there should always be men of great and solid learning, and evil would be the day when slight acquirement should be a substitute for laborious thought ; but it is also desirable that these accumulated treasures should be widely and bountifully distributed. It is good to have deep fountains in our munitions of rocks ; but it is not good that these fountains should waste themselves in darkness ; it is not good that they should merely feed the gorgeous river and the mighty cataract ; they should

also steal along in the sunny streamlet and give beauty to the secluded nook. Let there be rich men, and let them rejoice in their riches; let there be great men, and let them exult in their greatness; let there be men of strong intellect, but let them in their strength be merciful. It is not, however, the great, the noble, or the strong that are ever of destructive nature. It was the lean kine of Egypt that became the devourers, and yet were as skinny as before. So there are poor, lean, hungry animals of the critic species, unproductive as they are voracious, that are naturally the most unsparing and the most ferocious.

When Burns went first to Edinburgh he was the rage, and homage to him became the cant of certain circles. But it is seldom that such homage survives a season. Poor Burns lived not long; but he lived long enough to understand in bitterness the hollowness of drawing-room applause. On a second visit to the Scottish metropolis, the enthusiasts of the first had disappeared. It is ridiculous enough now to us to think of even the high gentry in Edinburgh supposing they could do honor by their notice to such a man as Robert Burns; but ridicule deepens to contempt when we read of paltry provincials in Dumfries looking askant at their mighty townsman; our indignation chokes our laughter at the record of treatment which small fashionables could offer to a great poet. Mr. Lockhart gives an anecdote from a gentleman who told him "that he was seldom more grieved than when, riding into Dumfries one fine summer's evening to attend a country ball, he saw Burns walking alone on



the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognize him." The horseman dismounted and joined Burns, who, on his proposing to him to cross the street, said, "Nay, nay, my young friend, that's all over now," and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizzle Baillie's pathetic ballad.

Burns, amidst poverty and sorrow, when needful comforts had almost failed him in his sickness and his children nearly wanted bread, in the thirty-eighth year of his age, quitted a world that was not soon to look upon his like again. Burns, the gladdener of so many hearts, was at last outwrestled, and the mighty fell — Burns, who had so deeply felt the rapture of genius and the calamities of life.

The retribution with which the errors of Burns chastised him holds out impressive warning to all who are capable of drawing wisdom from example. If happiness could have found a resting-place in one of the most honest hearts that ever struck against a manly bosom; if happiness had been with noble poetry, with an eloquence that never failed, with an imagination rich as the breast of Nature and bright as the stars in heaven; if happiness could have been brought down from the sky by lofty and aspiring sentiments or fixed upon earth by generous and gentle affections, — then happiness would have been the lot of Burns. But Burns had contracted habits to which peace soon becomes a stranger; and he who has such habits, be he

bard or be he beggar, has already entered on the evil day ; he may say, in all the bitterness of his soul, "Farewell the tranquil mind." It would seem as if Burns pictured by anticipation his own sad fate when he wrote the Bard's Epitaph. "Whom did the poet intend ?" asks Wordsworth, as quoted by Allan Cunningham. "Who but himself — himself anticipating the too probable termination of his own course ? Here is a sincere and solemn avowal ; a public declaration from his own will ; a confession at once devout, poetical, and human ; a history in the shape of a prophecy. What more was required of the biographer than to have put his seal to the writing, testifying that the foreboding had been realized and the record was authentic ?" —

Is there a whim-inspired fool,  
Owre fast for thought or hot to rule,  
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,  
Let him draw near,  
And owre this grassy heap sing dool  
And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,  
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among  
That weekly this area throng,  
O, pass not by,  
But with a frater-feeling strong  
Here heave a sigh.

Is there a man whose judgment clear  
Can others teach the course to steer,  
Yet runs himself life's mad career,  
Wild as the wave,  
Here pause, and through the starting tear  
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below  
Was quick to learn and wise to know,  
And keenly felt the friendly glow  
    And softer flame;  
But thoughtless follies laid him low  
    And stained his name.

Reader, attend ; whether thy soul  
Soars Fancy's flights beyond the pole,  
Or darkly grubs this earthly hole  
    In low pursuit,  
Know, prudent, cautious, self-control  
    Is Wisdom's root.

Thus much I thought I might venture on our poet's life. I shall now proceed to offer some remarks upon his genius.

Burns was a true child of Nature ; thence his growing power and thence the promise of his lasting fame. But, though the child of Nature, he was not the offspring of mere rude or uncultivated nature. The Scottish peasantry were a class of men among whom such a mind as that of Burns could perhaps receive its most fitting development. Without the refinement which tends to repress spontaneous expression, they had sufficient of moral and intellectual education to give that expression variety and strength. Their country, their history, and their religion were all such as to train a serious and reflective imagination. Therefore it is that no peasantry have furnished so much to national literature as the Scottish, and especially to national poetry. Within a period by no means extensive in their annals they have given to the world such writers as Ferguson, simple and full of music ; Allan Ramsay, in his Gentle Shepherd the very genius of pastoral poetry ;

Tannahill, a lowly spirit of melody and pathos, a sweet voice of truth and tenderness ; Hogg, the glorious wizard of the mountains, coming down from his shepherd's wilderness, his memory peopled with all olden legends and his fancy teeming with all fairy dreams. Burns, then, though mightiest, is but one of an honorable family ; though greatest and grandest among them, they are his kindred ; of some he is the heir, of others he is the progenitor.

Burns is a poet true, as I have said, to Nature, and therefore true to Art. Burns is not mechanically artificial, but he is patiently artistical. He had none of that indolent vanity which shrinks from careful preparation, which trusts all to sudden excitement and undigested emotions. He looked, as every man of genius does, to the ideal ; he knew it was not to be comprehended in a passing glance, or reached in a rapid bound, or imbodyed in a single effort ; and he knew that, in the endeavor to unfold it, no execution could be too thoughtful and no labor too great. It is not the consciousness of power, but the conceit of vanity, which relies presumptuously upon momentary impulse, which mistakes the contortions of a delirious imbecility for the movements of celestial agitation. The very creation of God, which required but the will and word of Omnipotence for instant and perfect existence, has been gradually constructed ; the earth on which we stand, so fair to look upon, so robed with beauty, so radiant with life and light, has been evolved from chaos through innumerable formations ; and even the thunder, so astounding in its crash, and the lightning, so sudden in its stroke, have long been generating in the womb

of heaven. The man of genius, the man of creative power, is at once inspired and industrious; at once a man of passion and a man of patience; at once a constructor and analyzer; a man of enthusiasm, but also a man of wisdom. Genius is not intoxication, and it is even more than rapture; it is capacity subject to the law of truth and beauty—the intense action of the soul, exalted, harmonious, and illuminated. The flash of noble thought may come suddenly on the brain, the torrent of enkindled feeling may rush upon the heart; but the spirit of order and of art must move over the face of this brilliant chaos ere it is shaped into that perfection which the world does not willingly let die. All mighty souls know this; the rustic Burns knew it not less than the godlike Milton.

The genius of Burns is now, by that instinctive appreciation which forms the supreme tribunal, placed in the highest order. Whence is this? All he has written may be contained in a moderately sized volume. If quantity of production, therefore, were needed to exalt a writer, which it is not, Burns should remain in the region of mediocrity. Neither has he composed, as critics would seem to require, a work of elaborate and faultless excellence; for he has not even attempted a tragedy or an epic poem. But critics cannot decide this point; and that common heart which decides for all has decided for Burns. The depth and extent of his humanity have gained him his distinction; and it is that humanity which gains distinction for any who outlive their age. It is this spirit of love and sympathy which evinces the kindred that all men recognize; it is this



spirit that reaches the truth of Nature below all changes, custom, and convention — below all colors which climates paint upon the skin ; it is this which outlives all facts and fashions and abides forever in the immortal heart. Whoever has this spirit must live ; whoever has it not must die ; whoever has this spirit must live, defiled though he may be with many evils ; whoever has it not must die, no matter how excellent he may be besides : no matter what his brilliancy, his sagacity, his talent, the generations will outlast them all — will give them to as deep oblivion as they do the tongues of Babel. The world cherishes Boccaccio, notwithstanding the offences of his tales ; so it likewise preserves Chaucer. Rabelais and old Montaigne continue in literature despite of their impurities ; and to think of Shakspeare dying, would be to conceive the extinction of letters or our race. All these men are deathless brothers ; and Burns is amongst them. His poetry is thoroughly human — a poetry which reproduces as we read it all the feelings of our wayward nature ; which shows how man was made to be merry and how he was made to mourn ; which enters the soul on its sunny or its gloomy side ; expands the heart with laughter or chastens it with melancholy.

In knowledge of man Burns strikes us with wonder unspeakable, when we consider the narrow circle in which he lived and the early age at which he died. A single song is like a compressed drama ; and within the circle of these songs we have impulses from every stage of life, from the perturbations of youth to the chill of age. To every shade of sentiment and affection, to

every change and turn of inward experience, to every oddity and comicality of feeling he has given a voice of musical and energetic utterance.

Man, and man directly, — man in the play of all his passions, — is, with Burns, the great object of interest. The descriptive and the picturesque for their own sake have, therefore, no place in his writings. A picture with him is never more than the drapery of a passion. The chivalric past has none of his veneration; and the past, in any form, only kindles him when he associates it with the movements of humanity or the struggles of liberty. The conflicts of feudalism, the rivalry of dynasties, the gorgeous falsehoods of departed ages had no enchantment to warm his fancy or to rule his pen. In this respect the writings of Scott and those of Burns are as opposite as are their characters. The brilliancy of descriptive narrative glows over the poems of Scott; the strong life of passion throbs in those of Burns. Even in the record of a tour this contrast is observable. Scott has the eye of an antiquarian and a map-maker united; Burns glances along as if space were a tiresome obstruction to his fiery nature. Scott surveys every baronial castle and notes all its chronicles; Burns raves with inspired fury on the field where the invader was struck down, where “tyrants fell in every blow.” Scott imagined that genius owed homage to rank; Burns gave the obligation another version, and conceived that rank should do reverence to genius. Peasant born, he was too proud in his humanity to covet titles: almost morbidly jealous of individual independence, hereditary aristocracy was not to him

poetically impressive ; its outward glare provoked his scorn and its deeper abuses sickened his imagination.

Two most *human* qualities in all poets are preëminent in Burns — I mean pathos and humor.

His pathos is profound, but kindly. No writer is less gloomy than Burns ; and yet none for the extent of his compositions has more pathos. No writer within the same compass has grander thoughts or deeper beauty ; and, by some magic of the heart, grand thoughts and deep beauty are always allied to melancholy. The canopy of the blue heavens, when not a cloud swims in its brightness, makes our rapture sad ; so it does when the stars stud it with ten thousand lights : the mountain's majesty and the ocean's vastness subdue our souls to thought ; and in this world of ours thought has ever something of the hue of grief. It would seem as if a mysterious connection existed between great objects and pensive feelings, between lofty sentiments and deep regrets — a kind of struggle in our higher nature against the limits of its condition : a disappointment at the long interval that separates our aspirations from the ideal tinges with sorrow all our sensations of the beautiful. Pathos such as this imbues all the graver poetry of Burns. Scarcely is there a woe which wrings the bosom between the cradle and the grave which has not an expression in the solemn music of his verse, from the gentlest whisper of feeling to the frenzies of every pain and the agonies of every passion. But, though deep, his melancholy is not morbid. It is the melancholy of great capacities and of real suffering — of error reacting on itself a just

infliction or glorious desires yearning for their congenial objects. The Muse of Burns was a rustic maiden — a maiden healthful and hardy. Fits of vapors she might occasionally have ; but the heather of her native mountains soon restored the elasticity of her step, and the breeze of her pleasant valleys quickly recalled the bloom to her cheek and the lustre to her eye. At times she sought the solitudes ; but she returned ere long to human homes and sang her wild and simple songs to the friendly circle. She loved, it is true, to meditate under the green shadow of the forest and to look up in raptured spirit to the lurid and darkened heavens ; but she loved no less the blessed sunshine on the harvest hill and the cottage smoke that floated in the evening sky. If occasionally she wept amidst the graves of her heroes, she came from the places of the dead more boldly to proclaim liberty in the places of the living.

This pathos is neither maudlin nor misanthropic. It does not make the head giddy with paradox nor whirl the heart upon a wild and chaotic tempest of doubt and selfishness ; it does not dissect out the evils of human nature and gloat over them with a diseased voluptuousness ; it does not lead you to sit at the feast of despair with the spectres and skeletons around you of unsocial horrors. It is no mawkish pretence of sentiment. Burns is true to what he feels ; and, right or wrong, he speaks it as it is. He maintains this course in his good and his evil. It saved him from grovelling and bombast ; it saved him from intellectual cant and from literary quackery. No language is so eloquent as

honest language. Truth goes direct to its purpose, while affectation is crawling around its petty circumlocutions; and, as the straight line is the shortest, the most sincere words are the most resistless. As the poet had honesty in himself, he had faith in others. His appeal was weakened by no scepticism in the capacity of humble men to appreciate the noble and the beautiful. He spoke to them as beings whose hearts were of the same substance as his own; he spoke confident of the result, and he was not disappointed. The first auditors of his verses were the obscure dwellers among Scottish hills and hamlets; and to his words he received as true a response as poetic enthusiasm could have desired. The sons and daughters of toil proved to him that he had not trusted them in vain. He gave them his faith; and they paid back the trust with a priceless love.

I have said that the pathos of Burns is not morbid; and I have said truly. In its lowest depths it is not dark, in the uttermost sadness it is not despairing. He grieves, but he never whines; and when he utters forth tones the most plaintive, they are yet so vigorous and so full that by the strong sound of them you feel that they come out from the stalwart struggle of a manly bosom. He has pathos, too, of every variety. He has the pathos of sympathy; and this sympathy is often so intense as to amount to a passionate indignation — as thus, in the poem *Man was made to Mourn* : —

Many and sharp the numerous ills  
Inwoven with our frame;  
More pointed still we make ourselves —  
Regret, remorse, and shame.



And Man, whose Heaven-created face  
The smiles of love adorn, —  
Man's inhumanity to man  
Makes countless thousands mourn.

This is a large and noble eloquence condensed into a soul-fraught poetry ; yet is it but one out of the many stanzas of which the whole consists of equal power. So likewise he has the pathos of pity, of tenderness, in their finest modulations. The chords of his own heart were most delicately attuned to “the still, sad music of humanity ;” and the breathings of its sorrow were of that genuine humanity to which other hearts cannot but respond. How much of such pitiful gentleness have we constantly in his poetry, often coming near to gusts of anger, like the song of a mourner in a stormy midnight or the moan of the tempest after its rush ! But sometimes we have melancholy complaints, without one tone of harshness, in such exquisite verses as those on *The Mouse* and *the Mountain Daisy*, in *Poor Mailie's Elegy* and *the Farmer's Address to the Old Mare on New Year's Day*. Illustrations of this point are in all his writings, prose as well as poetry ; but I will only mention one other — his *Lines on a Wounded Hare*. Burns has, in an eminent degree, the pathos which springs from contemplation of our mortal life, and not less that which comes from these solemn questionings of the spirit to which experience and the past give only accusing answers. A man of genius may do wrong ; he may lose himself in the mazes of the passions ; he may forget himself in the excitement and turbulence of the senses ; but all this is at a deadlier cost than it is to any other man. Let

no puny copyist of genius only in its errors and its wanderings doubly deceive himself, first, by supposing that he *has* genius, and then, more fatally, deceive himself by inferring that genius has impunity. True it is that genius, like charity, covereth a multitude of sins, and for the delight and the beauty which a great soul showers upon the world the world does abundantly forgive. But genius does not forgive itself. A strong moral sensibility, though, it may be, not strong moral principle, is mostly a concomitant, if not an essential element, in the nature of a man of genius; and, therefore, when such a man does violence to his higher sentiments his very genius becomes his punishment. The grandeur of his ideal; the innate love that he must have to the good and to the beautiful; the extent of his moral associations; the tenacity of his moral memories; the vitality of his imagination calling back again and back again the thoughts which had only disappeared, but were not dead, — all conspire to chastise him, and to chastise him by the faculties which enchant and move the world. The depth and the compass of his sympathies afflict him; and as the fountains of thought and feeling are full within him, so much the greater are the agitations that shake him. These remarks concern mainly those men of genius whose nature is that of a comprehensive humanity. Men there have been, and are, that might be adduced to contradict the position I have ventured here to take; for they were capable of much that was unworthy, and yet they did not suffer or repent. Some were deniers and some were sensualists; the deniers had fine art, and the sensualists had fine sentiments, and all were men of

genius. I have no reply to make, except that in such men their genius, as their humanity, was of partial though intense development, and that such was a class to which Burns did not belong. He was neither a denier nor a sentimentalist. He was a *man*, take him for all in all; and he was a poet in the whole compass of the *man*. The man spoke through the poet, not in gladness only, but also in every note of sorrow and compunction. What sombre power in his Ode to Despondency! —

Oppressed with grief, oppressed with care, —  
A burden more than I can bear, —  
I sit me down and sigh:  
O life, thou art a galling load,  
A long, a rough, a weary road  
To wretches such as I.

Dim, backward, as I cast my view,  
What sick'ning scenes appear!  
What sorrows yet may pierce me through,  
Too justly, I may fear!  
Still caring, despairing,  
Must be my bitter doom;  
My woes here shall close ne'er  
But with the closing tomb.

See this again in the affection with which he loved the sombre phases of external Nature and the force with which he painted them. Thus he meditates in winter: —

The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,  
The joyless winter day  
Let others fear, to me more dear  
Than all the pride of May.

The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul ;  
My griefs it seems to join ;  
The leafless trees my fancy please ;  
Their fate resembles mine.

Then, passing from this low-breathing despondency, we have lyric tragedy shouting down despair in a kind of reckless ecstasy. Bold and brave is this Song of Death : —

Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth, and ye skies,  
Now gay with the bright setting sun ;  
Farewell, loves and friendships, ye dear tender ties,  
Our race of existence is run.  
Thou grim king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,  
Go frighten the coward and slave ;  
Go teach *them* to tremble, fell tyrant ; but know,  
No terrors hast thou to the brave.

In the pathos of love Burns has no superior. What poet in ancient or modern times, short of Shakspeare, has sung with more varied inspiration than Burns the agitations with which love convulses the heart of man and breaks the heart of woman? In a few compressed but simple-meaning lines he reveals the passion in all its regrets and agony. And here, also, we can see the force, the simplicity, the vehement sincerity of his poetry ; and we can see exactly the same characteristics in his life. Allan Cunningham, in his biography of Burns, tells a very affecting anecdote which I may here fairly adduce in illustration. Jean Armour was lying ill in the house of her parents. Burns had arranged to quit the country forever, but wanted once, before he left, to see his

Jean. Burns attempted to go into the house ; but her father stood in the door to exclude him. Burns, maddened by his grief, pushed the old man aside, rushed up to his daughter's chamber, and, throwing himself across the bed, wept as if his heart would burst. And with regard to his verses to Mary in Heaven, if any thing could be more pathetic than the verses themselves, it was the circumstances in which he composed them. It is now familiar to all who read the least of literary history that this sublimely pathetic ode was composed on the anniversary of the maiden's death, while the poet lay abroad in the field during a bright harvest night recalling the images of past affections ; and out from this dream of the wakeful and troubled heart came that dirge of music which the noblest humanity inspired and which the rudest humanity must love. It is so familiar to every one that I will not dare to profane it by repetition. But here are a few lines of a song lyrical with all the melody of sadness : —

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever !  
 Ae farewell — alas ! forever !  
 Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee ;  
 Wailing sighs and groans I'll wage thee.  
 Who shall say that Fortune grieves him  
 While the star of hope she leaves him ?  
 Me, nae cheerful twinkle lights me ;  
 Dark despair around benights me.

\* \* \* \*

Had we never loved sae kindly,  
 Had we never loved blindly,  
 Never met, or never parted,  
 We had ne'er been broken hearted.

The humor of Burns, too, is full of humanity. It



is affluent with all the rich and laughing juices of the heart, and has only just so much of acid as adds pungency to sweetness. Burns has the humor most characteristic of his country; but beyond that he has a humor belonging to himself—a humor which, while it distinguishes the individual, endears him to his kind. In common with his countrymen, he has the cautious innuendo, the sly allusion, the insinuated sarcasm, the shrewd but mocking suggestion, the implied irony, the dextrously concealed and quiet fun, the sober joke; but he goes beyond all this, and has a humor which can make men of every nation shake their sides—a humor that often unites the broadness of Rabelais with the sentiment of Sterne. Such a humor demands not only extraordinary wealth of imagination, but also extraordinary force of intellect—a very uncommon fancy and a very strong common sense. And it was the union of these in Burns which so well enabled him to be at once comic and satirical—which enabled him so happily to combine the sarcastic and the ludicrous; and he does this in such a way that, while his victims writhe before us, we discern no malignity in their torturer. But it is in jocund, queer, joyous humor, humor reckless in its gladness, that Burns the most excels. In this species of humor he has scarcely an equal. Few of the greatest masters in humor come near him; and in what we may call the comic lyric he stands almost alone. The humor that makes richest melody in the heart; that sings for every joy; that, by every note in which laughter can sing out its ecstasy, swells the choruses of mirth and merriment; the humor that is a jubilee in the bosom, that gives widest liberty to

fancy, a saturnalia in which no thought of care or labor dares intrude, a carnival in which all kindly oddities of conception play their parts; a humor that combines imagination and feeling into numberless bright varieties to exhilarate our life, — of this humor, Burns, in his laughing moods, is the potent wizard; of this enlivening magic his gayer songs are the resistless spells.

This humor, too, is generously and jovially human; and, although Burns's ridicule is often coarse, it is rarely cruel. He strikes; but it is with the arm of a man, and not with the blasting of a fiend. Gall he does sometimes mingle with the cup of satire, but never the deadly nightshade: the barb he sharpens keenly; but he does not steep it in poison. He painted, it is true, with a breadth and richness of coloring that made men hold their sides and set the table in a roar, the fooleries and absurdities of individuals, the pretensions of sects and the bitterness of factions, the vanities of professions, the motley trivialities of presumptuous and stolid nonsense; but in the very storm of his sarcasm he spares our common nature. There is a ridicule which properly may be called diabolical; which desecrates every thing endeared and noble; which laughs not in festivity of spirit, but in bitterness of heart; which, like the witches in Macbeth around the midnight caldron, shrieks in the irony of satanic mirth over the degradation of humanity. This temper is realized in the writings of Swift and affected in those of Byron; but we discover no trace of it in the compositions of Burns. Burns would give even to Satan himself the grace of repentance and a chance of

heaven. Burns, like Byron, can pass rapidly from the grave to the grotesque, but altogether in a different spirit. In the one it is the prodigality of fun ; in the other it is the wilfulness of scorn. In the one it is sport ; in the other it is derision. The one as friend to friend mocks humanity pleasantly ; the other makes it a Sancho Panza, tosses it in a blanket, and laughs the louder the more it is humiliated.

Attributing humor to Burns, I do not estimate humor as the slight matter which many seem to think it. If we trust some persons, we should conceive that length of face was length of wisdom, gravity of look the veil of oracles, thickness of skull the safeguard of knowledge, and rigidity of muscle the solemn surface of an unfathomable philosophy. But humor in its higher form is the quality not only of a liberal, but of a cultivated spirit. It requires that the mental powers be vigorous as well as genial. It requires imagination and intellect, as well as a heart in the right place and the juices of the body in a good condition. Humor, as well as pathos, is the result of sympathy — of sympathy that embraces man in the most brotherly cordiality, weeps with those who weep, and rejoices with those who do rejoice. This is the humor of Shakespeare ; it is the humor of Hogarth ; it is the humor of Burns. And many a noble use has this honest faculty. Often is it more effective than sermons to make life lambent, to clear the sky that was becoming too heavy around us, to warm social intercourse, to dissipate evil passions, and, by its pleasant mockeries, to shame us out of nonsensical miseries.

Time would now fail me to refer to the poetry of

Burns with any special detail ; but, for pages so well known, a few brief reminiscences will be sufficient. How full of beauty is *The Vision* — the poem in which, with a self-conscious greatness almost Miltonic, he celebrates his own consecration to the glory of his country ! We read it in delight, in wonder, and with sorrow, and with joy ; we verily admit that “ the light which led astray was light from heaven.” With what solemn pleasure we recall the *Cotter’s Saturday Night* ! No other poem in the language shows how much the eye of a poet can see, how much the heart of a poet can feel, where another heart is dull and another eye is blind. To the prosaic nothing familiar is exciting ; but to the inspired all existence is full of glory. Here, upon a cottage floor, we have placed before us the most pure and the most noble virtues, the piety that looks to heaven, the patriotism that dignifies earth ; here we have the father returned from his toil, with his “ wee things ” circling his knees, his clean hearthstone, his “ thrifty wifie’s ” smile, his soul made glad with Sabbath hopes and with holy thoughts ; here are brothers and sisters gathered from the workday world around the parents that shielded and that blessed their infancy ; here are the pleasant face and the heart’s own smile ; here the homely feast, with a joy which luxury refuses and a gratitude which no luxury inspires ; here is first love, with maiden blushes, shames, and fears ; here are all the sublimities of the affections, all in the shades of unnoticed life. How noble is that father and that peasant priest as he bares his “ haffit locks,” and “ ‘ Let us worship God,’ he says, with solemn air ” ! —

Then, kneeling down, to heaven's eternal King  
 The saint, the father, and the husband prays:  
 Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing"  
 That thus they all shall meet in future days;  
 There ever bask in uncreated rays,  
 No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear;  
 Together hymning their Creator's praise  
 In such society, yet still more dear;  
 While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,  
 In all the pomp of method and of art,  
 When men display to congregations wide  
 Devotion's every grace except the heart!  
 The Power, incensed, the pageant will desert,  
 The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;  
 But haply in some cottage, far apart,  
 May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul,  
 And in his book of life the inmates poor enroll.

And how exalted that love of country which utters  
 this fine supplication!—

O Scotia, my dear, my native soil, —  
 For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent, —  
 Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil  
 Be blessed with health, and peace, and sweet content!  
 And O, may Heaven their simple lives prevent  
 From Luxury's contagion weak and vile!  
 Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,  
 A virtuous populace will rise the while,  
 And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.

The spirit of hilarity has never been so admirably  
 blended with the gloomy and the tender as in the tale  
 of Tam O'Shanter. Heroic and immortal Tam will  
 stand his ground while the name of witch or warlock  
 has a place in language. This marvellous mixture of



fun and fancy, this chronicle of midnight revelry, this record of wit and waggery, of good fellowship and ghosts, has now a lodgment in every mind that relishes drollery and genius. Here we have the sublime with the ludicrous ; images most delicate with images most homely ; subtle analogies with grotesque incongruities ; touches of sorrow with strokes of glee ; all coming in such rapid succession, that, while the broad grin is on the lip, the tear is starting to the eye. The Jolly Beggars gives us the very saturnalia of low life ; jovial poverty frolics away in the full abandonment of extravagance, dashed over, however, here and there with those shadings of regret which obtrude the sadness of life when men try to forget it most. The Halloween pictures the poor man's carnival, such as it used to be in Scotland, with all its superstitions and its sports. The Twa Dogs is a genial exposition of the poor man's philosophy. The dog of wealth, laying aside his master's pride in his master's absence, meets the peasant dog with very kindly courtesy ; and both, sitting tranquilly on their haunches, with nose to nose, and most sagacious phizes, discuss the comparative merits of riches and poverty, pity the folly of their two-legged fellow-creatures, congratulate each other on their canine superiority, and bless their stars for being dogs instead of men. Cæsar, the dog of high life, with an air of peculiar respectability and most complacent compassion, wonders how poor folks can live at all. Luath, his humble friend, knows that poor folks not only live, but live with very many pleasures ; and this Luath was a dog of sympathy : he shared the cottage sorrow ; he shared also the cottage joy ; he rattled away among the

dancers ; wagged his tail in the highest glee of his honest heart, and gave his chorus to the merry sound. When adversity was on the hearth his face grew long ; when better times returned it was broad again.

“My heart hae been sae fain to see them  
That I for joy hae barkit wi’ them.”

The whole of this poem is fraught with the noblest and the most endearing humanity — a humanity most varied and most musical in its tones, running quickly along all the chords of sadness and of merriment, throwing forth a harmony of charity and heart-breathing kindness in which grave sounds and gay mingle together, but not one vibration ungenial or discordant. That Burns should give to a dog sentiments thus characteristic of a sweet and generous temper, corresponds entirely to the feelings with which he regarded that animal, as illustrated in a passage which I have lately taken from a newspaper.

The following original anecdote of Burns is in a work entitled the *Philosophy of the Seasons*, by Rev. Henry Duncan : —

“I well remember with what delight I listened to an interesting conversation which, while yet a schoolboy, I enjoyed an opportunity of hearing in my father’s manse between the poet Burns and another poet, my near relation, the amiable Blacklock. The subject was the fidelity of the dog. Burns took up the question with all the ardor and kindly feeling with which the conversation of that extraordinary man was so remarkably imbued. It was a subject well suited to call forth his powers, and, when handled by such a man, not less

suited to interest the youthful fancy. The anecdotes by which it was illustrated have long escaped my memory ; but there was one sentiment expressed by Burns with his characteristic enthusiasm, which, as it threw a light into my mind, I shall never forget. ‘Man,’ said he, ‘is the god of the dog. He knows no other ; he can understand no other ; and see how he worships him ! With what reverence he couches at his feet ! with what love he fawns upon him ! with what dependence he looks up to him ! and with what cheerful alacrity he obeys him ! His whole soul is wrapped up in his god, and the powers and faculties of his nature are devoted to his service ; and these powers and faculties are exalted by the intercourse. It ought just to be so with the Christian ; but the dogs put the Christians to shame.’”

It is thus that the spirit of human love, the truest element of poetic beauty, can ennoble and consecrate all it touches ; it is thus that Burns elevates the most lowly objects — the farmer’s mare, proud in her age and services ; the little cowering mouse, houseless and frightened ; the dying ewe ; the wounded hare ; the simple daisy ; rustic sweethearts and rustic beggars, — all were endeared to his generous imagination ; and over them, while words have meaning, there will be laughing eyes and serious faces.

Burns was great in many forms of poetry ; but in lyric poetry he was greatest of all. The songs of Burns, in every point of view, are truly wonderful compositions. We are at a loss which most to admire — their number and variety, or their individual perfection. The lyre of Burns incessantly changes its tone ; and in

every change it throws forth a flood of new inspiration. Great indeed is the task to give poetic and condensed expression to those thousand impulses that ever heave within us and are evanescent as the ocean wave ; to furnish fitting words for the ideal and fervid longings which millions feel, but cannot utter for themselves ; to embody in lasting form innumerable and undefined desires ; to touch chord after chord of memory and emotion and to awaken the divine music that slumbers in the soul ; in a word, to give melody and speech to the complicated heart of man. Great is the task ; but Burns has accomplished it.

Burns was great in sadness and great in humor ; human in his melancholy, most loving in his laughter. When we hear the pleasant peal of his hearty mirth our bosoms dilate until we could embrace our species in affection. When, changing his tone, we feel the breath of his indignation or listen to his cry against oppression, our pulse beats quicker and our blood flows faster. Bard he was of the brave and fervent soul, destined to move humanity as long as language shall endure ; as long as the love of liberty, of independence, of fearless honesty, or patriotic courage shall have a refuge in our world.

Burns is a nobleman of Nature, a man for the toilers of earth to look upon and hope. In humble, rustic life, under the thatched roof which gave the peasant his shelter, in the field where the heir of labor in the sweat of his brow fulfilled the original destiny of man, Burns fed inspired thoughts and laid the foundation of a deathless fame. True, his life was short in years ; but how passing long was it in emotions, in

capacious and crowded fancies! His spirit was goaded, no doubt, with the vulgar cares of poverty and the worse results of passion; but it was glorified also with conscious genius. He could retreat from the vexations of the world to the sanctuary of his enriched imagination; and there, amidst all the evils of his outward condition, he could find in poetry its own exceeding great reward. Through all the sorrows that overspread his short but rapid course, amidst all the clouds that hung heavily over his path, glimpses of joy were ever and anon bursting on his enraptured eye which it is given only to the favored ones to behold. And who would not, if he could, have a soul so adorned with the beautiful, rather than without it be overburdened with the load of external fortune? Had Burns been merely a man of title, he had been forgotten as all titled dust since the days of Nimrod, as unknown as the dukes of Edom; a pompous funeral and a lying epitaph would have given him to oblivion. As it is, the recollection of him is garnered in the choicest corners of the heart, and his name is linked forever to the music of sweetest sounds.

I am now at the close of my task. I have gone through it lovingly and with reverence; sensible along the way of much goodness in my subject, and not forgetful either of some evil also. That many faults are in the compositions of Burns I apprehend most clearly, and that sad irregularities were in his life it requires small trial of candor to confess; but to have spread them out in ostentatious commentary would have served no purpose of this essay and gratified no desire of the reader. I am not blind to those errors; I



propose no excuse ; I deprecate no just condemnation ; and I have been forbearing from no moral indifference, no moral insensibility ; but, dealing with the memory of genius, I reflected that the *man* was before his God and the *poet* had met the sentence of the world. For wisdom or for warning, the events of his life are sufficiently familiar ; he that runs may read ; their moral meaning let him read and ponder ; let him learn, and let him be better. But I have no sympathy with that vampire-like spirit which disintombs the faults of the illustrious dead to feed the nauseous appetites of itself or others. I tread upon the grave with caution and compassion ; and while I do not regard genius as repealing the law of virtue, neither do I regard it as beyond the law of mercy. We need, all of us, great tenderness from those who surround us ; we need much, too, from those who survive us. If *we* require charity from men, who give them nothing, let us grant it to those who have enriched us and enriched the ages. In the noble and eloquent verses of Halleck, we, too, say of Burns, —

His is the language of the heart,  
 In which the answering heart would speak ;  
 Thought, word, that bid the warm tear start  
 Or the smile light the cheek.  
 And his the music to whose tone  
 The common pulse of man keeps time  
 In cot or castle's mirth or moan,  
 In cold or sunny clime.

\* \* \* \*

Praise to the bard ! His words are driven,  
 Like flower seed by the far wind sown,  
 Where'er beneath the sky of heaven  
 The birds of fame have flown.

Praise to the man! A nation stood  
Beside his coffin with wet eyes, —  
Her brave, her beautiful, her good, —  
As when a loved one dies.  
And still, as on his funeral day,  
Men stand his cold earth couch around  
With the mute homage that we pay  
To consecrated ground.  
And consecrated ground it is —  
The last, the hallowed home of one  
Who lives upon all memories,  
Though with the buried gone.  
Such graves as his are pilgrim shrines,  
Shrines to no creed or sect confined —  
The Delphian vales, the Palestines,  
The Meccas of the mind.

## THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

To a writer such as De Quincey, so wide in the range of his power, so multifarious in his topics, so versatile in his genius, so manifold in his scholarly acquisitions and accomplishments, we cannot do full justice within the limits of a single essay. All we propose, therefore, is to mark some of his peculiarities.

The idea of De Quincey which the mind calls up first and most vividly is that of a *dreamer* — a great dreamer — a dreamer entirely singular, alone amidst all secular literature. Like a spirit at the entrance of an enchanted region, the opium vision keeps the passage to that magnificent and ideal kingdom which De Quincey has created for us in the world of mind; it arrests us at the portal; we converse with it in a strange delight; and it puts a spell upon us which cannot be shaken off, countercharm as wisely as we may. We *must* look at and speak with it until our spirits learn to be tranquil. It is thus that the earliest production of De Quincey affects us; and it is through that earliest production we come in the beginning to know him. This is first in the order of *reading*; it is first also in the order of *impression*; though it is not according to the order of *worth*. In every generation, persons will enter into acquaintance with

De Quincey through *The Confessions*. Persons are likely to begin to know him by that in which he began to write; and herein, for advantage or for injury, a difference lies between him and some others of the great in literature. Others as well as he began with what was morbid and impassioned. Indeed, in minds of heat and power, this is natural. It is natural that the embryo of a giant imagination yet enveloped in sense and passion should make manifest its existence and its coming birth in spasms and in qualms. A sickness of this kind groans in the *Werter* of Goethe, in *The Robbers* of Schiller, and in the *Queen Mab* of Shelley; but we seldom begin to read Goethe, Schiller, or Shelley in these works; and these are not the works which come potently to our thoughts associated with the names of their authors. And so it would be also with the name of De Quincey if *The Confessions* were nothing more than morbid and impassioned; but, besides the pathetic incidents of the story and the wild singularity of the experience, there were in them a wealth of learning, a maturity of art, and a completeness of execution which at once established them as not alone a series of exciting revelations, but as a finished classic in the letters of the world.

Dreaming, in itself, constitutes no distinction for De Quincey or for any one. We all dream, and dream, too, with our eyes open. The dullest of us dream as well as the brightest, and the most wretched as well as the most happy. Half of time is day and half is night; but more than half our conscious being is made up of dreams; and of these, the dreams of the day

outnumber the dreams of the night. "We are (all of us) such stuff as dreams are made of; and our little life is rounded with a sleep." Shakspeare, who thus wrote, paints the world as a stage; and out of the many parts which man plays on it he has traced us one through its seven ages. He might have shown us, had it so pleased him, that every age through all the seven has its dreams, and that these dreams change with the transitions in the sleep of life by which they are surrounded. Dreams begin with consciousness, and they continue to the end; they change, indeed, but they do not cease. Even infancy, no doubt, has its own illusions; and "the whining schoolboy, creeping like snail unwillingly to school," dreams much as he lingers by the way. Then to the lover come the dreams of passion and of youth. The soldier dreams of cannon and of glory; the alderman of civic honors and of city feasts. Age and second childhood also have their dreams; and, though age may be a miser and only dream of money, the second childhood brings back the freshness of the first, and falls into its final sleep in a dream of flowers and green fields.

Such is our state as soon as life becomes more than the simplest sensation. Imagination begins to work, and we begin to dream. While we have yet no past our visions are but brief; the sorrows and the gladness, the incidents, the objects, the desires, and the expectancies out of which we shape them are close about us. In early youth, the space is small which each vision fills; but more exciting is it than when, in after days, it fills a larger space; for it is the first awakening of the soul to mystery and wonder in the



midst of eternity and the universe. How sweet, and lovely, and generous are the dreams which then fill the fancy! Who that has had can forget them, or ever recall them, without emotion? What a beautiful earth this is while the illusion of the fresh soul is yet spread over it! As far as the eye can see our Eden smiles; and beyond the girdle of the mountains or the sea a boundless Eden is fancied which is fairer still. Spirits are in the forest; sounds "that syllable men's names" are heard among the branches; the low summer wind makes strange music in the glen; and in the loneliness by the stream there is solitude which is full of inspiration. At such times, while the high dome of heaven is bright in the glory of the noon or pale in the starlight evening, youth will have dreams which it is good to have had, even though subsequent experience may be but contrast and disappointments — dreams of love, and hope, and virtue, of bold purposes and brave deeds, of unselfish exertions and of generous achievement. But early dreams are often gloomy also. Youth is not all a season of joyfulness. Shadows of uncertainty rest upon its untried life; anxieties and terrors arise to it with the unfolding of its opening faculties. Enthusiasm has its reaction of apathy; and wings which were plumed for an aspiring flight relax in the mere attempt, and, instead of bathing in the lustre of the skies, drag heavily upon the ground. If there is nothing more joyous than a smile upon the lip of youth, the light of rapture in its eye, the blush of gladness on its cheek, so there is nothing more sad than the cloud of despondency on its brain or the sting of grief within its heart. And many are its

sources of unrest and pain. It has such in its curiosity, in its passions, in its best and highest qualities. It is bewildered with conjectures ; it is irritable with longings for truth which it cannot obtain ; it is troubled with the problems of existence ; it questions the infinite and eternal by which it is surrounded, and can get no answer that satisfies it ; it dashes itself against barriers which guard the mystery of being, and is bruised in the concussion ; it would climb to the heights of heaven, and in the first bound it is flung back upon the earth. It has not learned to wait, to accept, to believe, and to endure. The very plenitude of force often becomes a torment ; and the turbulence and agitation which in due order are to settle into peace and strength may be little short of misery while they last. The best and highest qualities may be in youth, as we have said, sources of unrest and pain. Talents may be in it, and a consciousness of them, with the dreary conviction that they can never be cultivated. Poverty, like doom, may hang over it, and inevitable ignorance oppress its abilities, yet leave it alive to the passion for exertion and quick to the shame of impotence. Destiny besets it behind and before, and genius is only there to feel the bondage. Sensibilities and affections, as well as intellect and imagination, may be made fountains of bitterness in the heart of youth — sensibilities disregarded or tortured ; affections broken, wasted, or suppressed ; so that what in healthy nature would be elements of joy and vigor are changed into those of suffering and disease. Then are the dreams of youth uncheering and disquieted ; and many there are who have them.

The wonderful dreams which De Quincey first put into literature came to him while he was yet in youth. The *peculiarity* is not, as we have said, that he had *dreams*, for such we all have; it was in the *kind* of dreams. Leaving out the circumstances that moulded and colored them, his dreams received their peculiarity from his genius and his training, from the specialty of his faculties and the quality of his education. His faculties were such as would not only lead a man to dream, but to dream, as he did, gloriously. The education which disciplined these faculties, giving him a key to the richest mental treasures of the world, was such as would supply for his dreams luxuriant substance and impress on them forms of beauty. There is, for instance, that peculiar intellect of his — an intellect which you feel to be most simple in the unity of its life, and yet most manifold in the diversity of its action. It used to be said of Braham that his voice was a marvel, insomuch that it contained every order of voice; but sing as he might, whether in the sweetness of the treble or in the power of the bass, the distinct individuality of Braham was ever in the song. And so it is with the intellect of De Quincey: whether it is meditative in gentle thought or sharp in analytic criticism; whether it explains the subtle charms of Wordsworth's poetry or unravels a knotty point in Aristotle's logic; whether it detects a lurking feeling in the heart of woman or explores the obscure profundity of Kant's philosophy, — it is as perfect in each as if it was fitted only for *that*. It is an intellect which no one can mistake, and yet it is an intellect which no one can define. Will you call it deep? You

will not speak untruly ; but it is also high. If at one time it is down amidst the mysteries of thought, it is at another high and soaring amidst the lights of science. Not that it is properly scientific in acquisition and exactness ; but it is so in spirit and in sympathy. In one sense it is a broad intellect, embracing large capacities for knowledge, and with an athletic vigor to supply them, having a vigilant spirit of inquiry and a catholic spirit of fellowship with all seekers. In another sense it is a keen intellect, with the eye of a cat to glance into the dark, with the eye of an eagle to bear the ardors of the sun, quick as a hawk to pounce upon a brilliant falsehood, slow as a ferret to pursue a sophistry through all its hidden sinuosities. So likewise it is a logical intellect, acute in the discovery of agreements and differences, fertile in methods of comparison and decisive in rectitude of inference, having in equal degree of excellence the sagacity which admits no feeble link into the chain of an argument, and the strength which can carry it on in length and continuity until the whole is perfect. Yet it is also a vagarious intellect ; it goes whither it will ; the beaten road cannot restrain it ; but ever and anon it disports amidst the amplitude of the surrounding country. Now it is climbing hills ; then losing itself in glens. Now it is thinking in the wood ; then it is racing on the plain. At one time it muses over its own image in the lake ; at another looks for itself visioned in the clouds or wandering through the stars. But, vagrant as it may seem, there is a soul of order which never ceases to direct it ; wild, wayward, and capricious as it may appear, it has illuminated centres of which it

never loses sight ; and, much as it may diverge, it has always a clear discernment of its course. Then there is that memory of his, too, quite as peculiar as his intellect. It is rare to meet with any man who has a memory so large as De Quincey has in whom it is at the same time so *personal*. Men of ample outward memory seldom dwell much upon their inward life. Men who *do* dwell much upon their inward life hardly ever have ample outward memory. The first assertion in this proposition is illustrated in such men as Sir Walter Scott, and the second in such men as Charles Lamb. In each class memory is a faculty of power ; and the power is so different in its direction in one class from what it is in the other that we could scarcely suppose there could be found a single mind who should have the faculty with the power which it has in both. Such a mind, however, is De Quincey's. Many of his writings are directly autobiographical ; many of them are indirectly so ; but, while most distinctly and most minutely *personal*, we know from the impression which he leaves upon us that the field of his memory infinitely expands beyond the circle of his experience. This is the more remarkable, since he gives us his experience with so thorough a searching of his soul, and in recollections which are so sad and so impassioned. But still he keeps his memory clear and full ; and, upon philosophy, history, literature, art, science, nature, and humanity, it shows as wide excursions as if it never lingered upon self and an horizon whose transparency private sorrows have not darkened, but adorned. Out of all it is furnished and enriched. It is no less accurate than ample, nor more wealthy than it is ready.



It has trifles for small topics ; it has grandeur for noble ones ; it can draw from the distant or the near ; it commands the centuries of the past as it does the hours of the present, and is as familiar with the annals of the earth as with the gossip of the neighborhood. Even the most abstract subjects in the many and miscellaneous volumes of De Quincey's writings spring in some way out of suggestions or associations of his individual life ; yet they are treated with as extensive a range of reflection, with as independent a grasp of thought, and with as much of impersonal illustration as if they came to the mind from the remotest regions of speculation. A memory of rare qualities indeed is that of De Quincey's, which gives the vividness of self to objective acquisition and to the consciousness of self the enlargement of imperial knowledge. Conceive these two primal faculties of intellect and memory as thus existing, active in an imagination of prodigal and various energy ; grand at times ; in turn, gay ; sportive now as a child from school, and then solemn as a prophet from the wilderness ; now like the song with which a mother puts a babe to sleep upon her bosom, and again like a lofty anthem which fills a mighty temple with the pomp of music. Conceive these faculties alive with all fine, brave, and honorable sensibilities — alive to whatever is lovely in the works of creation or to whatever is grand in the spirit of man : conceiving thus, we form our ideas of De Quincey's genius ; and out of this genius were the substance and the shapings of his dreams.

Not by opium, therefore, as an *efficient* cause, were those extraordinary visions which he first revealed

in *The Confessions*. Opium was, indeed, the exciting means ; but the power was *within*, or the vision would not have come. What fool is he, then, who thinks that, by eating opium like De Quincey, he might have visions like De Quincey ? He might as well fancy that, by putting on De Quincey's hat, he would have De Quincey's brain ; or that, by wrapping himself in one of De Quincey's old waistcoats, he would become possessed of his experience. It is said that Dryden used to take physic as a preparation for composition. Settle might have done the same ; but his composition would not on that account have been more like to Dryden's. He would have all the pain, but nothing of the power ; "the contortions" without "the inspiration ;" for salts or castor oil, we apprehend, are not chemically different in the stomach of a genius and in the stomach of a dunce. Cleanse a dunce you cannot from the heavy stuff of dulness ; you cannot with any infusion put into him the fire of wit ; and where there is no fire, and no possibility of kindling it, fuel is to no purpose. Though duncehood may torture itself and fiercely cry aloud, it is still but as the priesthood of Baal ; and no lightning from above answers to its call. It is with genius as it is with goodness, or, indeed, as it is with sin too ; a man has it not by reason of any thing which goeth into his mouth. Give a booby the nectar of the gods, and he is no more divine than he was before. The visions, therefore, which De Quincey had from opium, whether of glory or of gloom, had their elements in his nature, his education, and his genius. Whence the raptures of his Saturday nights devoted to the opera ? Evidently in that love of music

which all his writings incidentally make manifest, in the affinity of his mind with gorgeousness, in the susceptibility of his fancy to picturesque combinations, and in those latent emotions of a poetic temperament which would find the most perfect expression prepared for them in the impassioned breathings of the lyrical and dramatic imagination of the higher opera. Gifted by genius, refined by education, enveloped in the silence of thought, full with the dormant mysticism of youth, the excitement of opium made the opera, which would have been to a vulgar mind but a blaze of confusion, to him an Elysium of delight. And those terrible dreams, which made him so long a desolate and an affrighted pilgrim amidst the wild and strange imaginings of Oriental life, he ascribes simply to the entrance of a Malay one day into his dwelling, to whom he gave, as a sort of alms, a potion of opium. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" for there *was* a great matter laid up in the mind of De Quincey, of suggestive associations and of much reading, or the little fire of the Malay's entrance would not have kindled that great fire of inward torments which consumed him for many months. It was out of a nature as capacious as sensitive came *Suspiria de Profundis* — those sighings from the depths, those recallings of unwonted sorrows, those lookings down into abysses of awful experiences, which none can view, even in mere description, without trembling to the centre of his heart and thinking to the centre of his soul.

Now, if by any means, by opium or otherwise, some men might have dreamed dreams and seen visions such as De Quincey dreamed and saw, none could have

philosophized on them as he has, none but he could have so analyzed them. With other men they would, indeed, have been only the baseless fabrics of so many visions ; soon they would have melted into thin air and have left not a wreck behind. But with De Quincey it was not so. He did not let them thus evaporate. Once in his mind, he must know the conditions of their existence ; once *there*, they had a place in the universe of things ; and, though they might have come out “ of Chaos and old Night,” they had now a being, an order, and a law ; and this being, order, and law, our thinker, not less than dreamer, must investigate. Accordingly, the phantasms which had passed before him in the trances of the spirit he calls back into the wakefulness and the light of memory, and then subjects them to the scrutiny of reason. He leads us into the secret chambers of the mind, and describes to us the brilliant, the grotesque, the dismal, the fearful images with which these chambers had once been crowded. He opens to us intricate and hidden passages of consciousness. He conducts us to deep and obscure caverns of emotion, and so floods them with the light of his experience that we see them in their whole extent, in all their crannies and in all their windings. He shows us how remote and powerful illusions may be connected with almost unnoticeable sensations, and he traces the chain through the links of association by which they are so connected. He shows us how prolifically the germs are deposited in the soil of the mind, which even a common drug may fructify into delicious pleasures, into horrible pains, into passions that torture, into phantoms which affright, into ideas that assume the force of realities ;



how time and space are so changed that instants seem eternities and the measure of a chamber has the vagueness of immensity, and all in reference to a worthy end ; for, in exhibiting the influence of this drug, he draws attention to the inscrutable workings of our spiritual nature, and to the awe with which a nature so wonderfully and fearfully formed should be regarded. And this impression De Quincey leaves by the manner in which he tells his *dreams*. If some men could have had such dreams, they might still have been unable to understand the philosophy of them ; and, had they understood the philosophy, most men would have failed when they attempted to combine in language such passion, description, and metaphysics as are found united in The Confessions of De Quincey. The strength of impulse and the heat of fancy which would have predisposed certain minds for such visions would have left them without the faculty of analysis ; or, if that faculty might by possibility have been connected with such predisposition, the action of it must in general have chilled the fervor which the description of the visions would have needed. It is as if there should be in the same mental individuality the enthusiasm of a mystic, the subtilty of a schoolman, and the diction of a poet. And this is exactly the case with De Quincey. He is a mystic when he dreams ; when he scrutinizes his dreams he is a schoolman ; and when he tells them he is a poet. In these Confessions of his we have the most fascinating grace of narrative and wonders more exciting than those which stirred our boyish curiosity in the Arabian Nights ; we have a wealth and glow of imagery that not only give splen-



dor to the surface of the story, but that are woven into its texture; we have transitions of feeling so delicately managed as show that the most skilful art is only perfect nature; and a music, so grand at times, at times so sweetly sad, mingles with the whole, that we linger as we read, until its harmony pervades our thoughts. Each word is most distinct; and yet there is always more meaning than meets the ear — suggestion which stirs the mind, and ideas which do not overburden or obscure expression, but which come by means of expression and come after it. The ideal, the grand, and the wild are brought into view with the wretched and the real; but each has its place in the picture; each contributes to the unity of the impression and adds to the effect. The sick self is revealed without being offensive or obtrusive; and exceptional conditions of mind, though as oases in the wilderness of human loneliness, are made out of that loneliness to cry with a piercing eloquence. It is not the barbarous cry of a savage in pain; it is not the harsh and mindless cry of the maniac among tombs; it is the threnody of a soul that has gone astray, but that is still inspired. In telling the story of his dreams, the most squalid scenes gain dignity in the pathos with which De Quincey overshadows them; and the most morbid terrors, as he reveals them, have the gloom, not of disease, but of tragedy.

We have dwelt long on this visionary tendency of De Quincey's genius, but we think not disproportionately. It forms a very striking and distinctive characteristic of his genius, and we could not rapidly pass it over. The spirit of a dreamer, we believe, was

always largely his; it was in him from the beginning, was in him by constitution; and this possibly, no less than suffering and illness, may have led him unconsciously to opium. The action of opium corresponded with the faculty of Nature; and it was thus as much the issue of a latent aptitude as it was the recognized origin of certain determinate effects. But it is not in connection with opium alone that we notice in De Quincey the spirit of a dreamer. Whenever his memory is concerned with his own personal past we find him in his dreamy temper. Places, persons, incidents, feelings, as *visioned* through his remembrance, take us away as completely from vulgar and from every-day life as a minstrel's ballad or a pilgrim's story. It is not that we doubt in any way their reality; we feel that they are genuine, that they belong to humanity and earth; but we feel also that they have relation to a mind on whose recollections they have charms not their own. When we read De Quincey's reminiscences of Grassmere, of Society at the Lakes, of Charles Lloyd, of Charles Lamb, of Walking Stewart, of Edward Irving, of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and others, we are so inwrapped in the ideal, so uncarnalized, so carried out of our routine experience, that no legend of olden time and no tale of distant lands could more excite us. We know not how it may be with others, but thus it is with us. The English Mail Coach, in one of De Quincey's Essays, is almost as much a thing ethereal as the "ship" of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner; and there is nothing in that poem more mystically fearful than De Quincey's Vision of Sudden Death, with the addition, that this Vision has a fearful human in-

terest. When strong affection unites with memory, then with the picturings of the dreamy past there come the low sighings of the musing heart, and, as in the article on his brother, a story of strange adventures, imbued with a lyrical melancholy, approaches the modulation of an elegiac song. When it is merely his imagination that is active, — when in its creative energy it works impersonally, emancipated from all restraints of individual limitations, — the dream spirit shows itself in wilder, deeper, broader, and grander conjurations. A wonderful art has De Quincey of bringing the unfamiliar near, and yet keeping it in its closest nearness still unfamiliar. He makes a statement which in its simple annunciation startles; he varies it until you see it at every side; and he unfolds it until it conceals no more an implication or an inference: still, as ever, it is strange; still, as ever, it is exciting. He does not wear out the novelty of his statement or of his theme by elucidation; he only confirms and brightens it. It is not from your ignorance that he asks for wonder; he exacts it from your knowledge, and renders marvel greater as his meaning becomes more clear. He will put your mind at once in possession of a given condition of wretchedness. Your mind grasps it in the fulness of its dimensions, and you see it in every part of its boundary. You think you have no more to learn and no more to feel. You quickly are aware that you have only begun to learn and begun to feel. A kind of suffering, which is in its very nature isolated, you fancy you have fathomed as soon as it is described; but this is only the mere point from which De Quincey

starts. He opens to you a huge grief, and the sympathy which he at once excites seems hardly capable of increase ; but incident follows after incident, circumstance after circumstance, and each comes upon the other to the end with an aggravation of affliction. You are carried along the story as in the course of a train of reasoning ; distress succeeds distress with an inevitable sequence ; it is the very logic of misfortune ; and, while it harrows your feelings, it interests your understanding. If you consider a story of De Quincey's in its dramatic relations not less than in the narrative ones, you will distinguish the author's peculiarity. In the first act you conceive that you have the whole of the tragedy. A calamity, singular and dreadful, is presented with such unity of misery that progress of event, action, or emotion would be, we might suppose, impossible. But here it is that we see the energy of the dramatic element in De Quincey's genius and the resources of his imagination. He does not, as in the common methods, go on through a succession of deepening sorrows to some final suffering, but, in a method which is entirely his own, brings out all the pain which the original affliction contains, until the mind gradually enters into its immensity. In the mean time, scenery, illusion, and circumstances, in continuance or in change, are made to correspond perfectly around the central idea and its animating passion. But coherent, artistical, and in order as these creations are, both in their narrative and dramatic relations, there is yet a wildness in them which makes them appear as if they were formed in a wizard's trance. Our space does not

admit of illustrations ; but they will know what we mean who have read the Household Wreck, the Flight of a Tartar Tribe, the Spanish Nun.

De Quincey is not a dreamer out of season. When mental vigilance is required, no man is more "wide awake." Then he is emphatically a *seer*, and one with the sharpest and clearest intellectual discernment. In apprehending and in discriminating, his "mind's eye" is both far-reaching and minute. He looks deeply and remotely into centuries of time, and he pierces with finest vision into the sources of intellectual and moral life. He beholds as with an inward sense the conditions of olden nations, the working of their institutions, the spirit and the action of their religions, their philosophies, and their literatures. Away in the distance of ages, through the mists of vapory traditions, across the deserts of time strewn with the ruins of successive and intervening civilizations, he can discern the relations of an event, the significance of a custom, the essence of a character. Nor is his faculty less powerful or acute in the system of life and letters to which he himself belongs. To the power and acuteness of this seeing faculty we may trace much of the excellence of De Quincey's criticism. His rectitude, his fulness, and his lucidness of spiritual vision afford him, in an eminent degree, the primary conditions of true literary judgment. By this, with a true instinct, he sees *into* the genius of an author ; and by this, aided by his wonderful learning, he sees all round the life of an author. In a manner which belongs to himself, with an originality so individual as to defy imitation, De Quincey makes the



life and the genius reciprocally illustrate each other ; and in both, by this mutual illustration, he reveals and vindicates the *integrity* of the man. By incidents in the life, unnoticed until *he* drew attention to them, he surprises you constantly with the discovery of secrets which lurked in the distinction or genius of his author ; and again by unconscious manifestations which he detects in his author's genius he frequently clears up mysteries in his life. For confirmation of these views, we refer to his essay on Shakspeare. We can only refer to it ; but *that* is enough. The most cursory reader will observe in it, without the aid of a commentary, what unsuspected lustre the critic brings out from the obscurities of biography to shine upon the path of the poet's genius ; what meanings hidden in the poet's writings he draws forth, which, *impersonal* as they seem, give us some arcana of the poet's individual and impassioned experience. In this there is implied the excellence of De Quincey's criticism — in discovery, in selection, in removing errors, in supplying omissions, and in the suggestiveness and the pregnancy of its distinctions. Whoever studies De Quincey's writings with an observant spirit will note evidences of these qualities in every essay, almost in every page. The light of his interpretation reveals ever some new thing in ancient authors ; and even modern authors with whom we had supposed ourselves most familiar, brought under its beams, have ideas for us which we did not before find out. These novelties are presented with only such an amount of disquisition as is strictly needed. De Quincey has too much of

his own to say to repeat what has been said by others ; and he has too much that is distinctive to say to enlarge on what is common. Herein we perceive his excellence of selection. He gives his reader credit for some previous knowledge ; and so he does not go over the whole subject. He takes for granted that his author has made the impression which it was the destiny of his genius to make ; and he does not undertake to help him. He assumes that the instinct for which all art exists has not been false or inert until he began to write ; and he assumes, likewise, that criticism has not been idle in the great field of the *ideal* until he began to work. He does not condescend to write to those below the standard of instructed intelligence ; he attempts not to arouse invincible stupidity nor to be within the reach of elementary ignorance. What is done, therefore, he considers done, and seems willing to believe that his readers are as well aware as he is that certain points are, for all duration, settled. He accordingly chooses only such positions as remain still unoccupied in the literature of criticism. He knows, for instance, that, in regard to any transcendently great writer, no primary question is open. A most important point to be examined and defined concerning a great writer will seldom have relation to the *essence* of his genius, but will rather be something which is indirect and circumstantial. What can be said in this way now on Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, or many besides ? What such immortals are to letters and to man involves no leading points to be decided ; but often, What was each to his age ? What was the

age to him? What were the influences about him? What was he to them? how far their slave, how far their sovereign? These and numberless other subsidiary inquiries will always suggest topics of vital interest. Upon such inquiries De Quincey spends a good deal of his strength; and he never leaves them until they shine with a splendor that throws back illumination on the genius to which they are but accidental associations. After going with De Quincey through inquiries which appear, at first, but most subordinately incidental, we feel, when they are closed, that we have clearer insight of the author's genius, that we have more consciousness of its power, that we have more solemn impressions of its greatness than when we have read ambitious and elaborate reviews which propose no less than to examine inwardly and outwardly the sublime structure of a great man's mind. In this method we recognize the excellence of De Quincey, which we have mentioned, in removing errors and in supplying omissions. Since criticism became a fine art, no man has more ennobled it than De Quincey; no man has infused into it more force of meditation or glorified it with more beauty; and yet not a little of his best criticism consists in removing errors, in supplying omissions. This task, which some — who from their ignorance would not know an error, and who, if they did know it, could not, from their feebleness, correct it — might think too humble for their abilities, De Quincey has made the occasion of compositions as exquisite and as eloquent as any that enrich our language. But De Quincey's criticisms stop not in correction and addition, but use correction and addition

as the means of opening ideas to the mind that are grand in wisdom and of quickening sentiments in the heart that are steeped in tenderness. In demolishing the small critics of Shakspeare and their big pretensions, how profoundly, at the same time, does he teach us of Shakspeare himself! In exposing the shallow criticism of Addison and the conceited pedantry of Shaftesbury, how deeply does he carry us into that soul, as fathomless as planetary space, in which the mild spirit of the Spectator was lost and into which the vain mind of the learned lord had never entered! Even in correcting some mistakes as to the circumstances of Goldsmith and as to the condition of literature and literary men in his time, benignly and admiringly does he open to us the sweetness of that humanest genius, of that most kindly nature; with reverential sympathy he touches on his life; with a gracious humor, which brings the light of laughter and the tear of thought together to the eye, he glances at harmless follies and at ludicrous distress; with a pathos which will have nothing but the tear he pauses over graver sorrows; with indignant respect he does justice to nobleness which the dull could not perceive and which the envious would not acknowledge, and, while giving due praise to an eloquent biographer, insinuates, with an art that is entirely his own, a more affecting and impressive estimate of Goldsmith in a few lines than all the volumes concerning him can inspire which eulogists have written. Still more decisively can we say this with regard to De Quincey's treatment of Pope. Nothing can we think of which comes nearer to the perfection of philosophic criticism. Upon no writer in our

tongue has there been so much criticism expended as on Pope except Shakspeare, and upon no writer except Shakspeare has there been expended more false and inexact criticism. Of Pope, as well as Shakspeare, critics have been everlastingly saying the things which they ought not to have said. In saying of Pope, as De Quincey charges them, that he was a writer of the French school, that he was of an inferior grade of poets, and that his distinctive merit was *correctness*, they have been saying, as De Quincey has shown, what they ought not to have said; and he has shown it with an amazing prodigality of learning, logic, and illustration. What they ought to have said, but did not say, or did not say with sufficient power, he has said for them with all adequacy and fitness — that Pope was a great, impassioned, musical thinker of social life; that he had not personal malignity enough for a satirist nor sustained strength of intellect enough for a philosopher; that beauty and tenderness had more accordance with his genius and his nature than the severity of a chastener or the speculation of a sage; that he was a man of strong affections, which unfolded themselves in filial devotion and in friendship, but which had deeper capacities still in silence; that there were innate germs of grandeur in his soul which did not open into power or which had but imperfect growth; that especially, notwithstanding his occasional levity and his seeming latitudinarianism, he had sincere Christian instincts; and that these have prompted and inspired some of his truest poetry. Accordingly, and this we presume ourselves to add, there is in all Pope's best poetry, either latent or in expres-



sion, much of struggle with the moral on one side and with the mysterious on the other ; much of impassioned pathos and much of spiritual aspiration. We do not maintain that others have not written fine things on Pope as well as De Quincey — for instance, Hazlitt has ; but no one else has consecrated Pope's genius with such a compact and massive monument of criticism — a monument, we venture to assert, which will be as durable as the most classic of Pope's own poems. And here we may properly bring into view the value of De Quincey's critical distinctions, as one of the most valuable of them occurs in connection with his criticism of Pope. It is the distinction which he makes between "*the literature of knowledge*" and "*the literature of power*," and which he most philosophically as well as most eloquently establishes and explains. This distinction, as every thoughtful reader will perceive, is a pregnant and most suggestive one, profound with import, yet simple of apprehension, and as easy of application as it is original. It shows us that not that which *teaches* is greatest, but that which is *inspired* and which *inspires*. The facts and forms which constitute the matter of instruction have a literature most changeable, most perishable ; the *life* by which a great work of genius comes into being, by which it continues in being, renders it an integral and immortal thing ; it alters not and it dies not. As this is greater in its nature, so it is higher in the order of its influence ; and such a conviction many of us in these times need to feel. In our age, when the physical and the *comfortable* claim to be uppermost ; when the highest evidence of *life* is looked for in the *palpa-*

*ble* ; when even the ghosts who have put off the body and are gone beyond the grave are called on to make their existence known by drumming on a table ; when the love which was ineffable in the beating heart is no proof to memory that it is deathless, but when consolation is found in the leaps of chairs ; when sainted thought which is left behind has not the power to persuade us that still the thinker *lives*, but a *row* among tin pots or a dance among the pokers strengthens our trembling faith and confirms our feeble hope — and all this is done through the organisms of electric spinsters or the potent intestines of biological mountebanks, — in such a state of things, any man who stands on the side of the spiritual and ideal is a genuine benefactor to society and among the best of workers. It is well that some men have courage to confess to owning souls, and have the grace not to feel insulted when others put faith in their confession, not to feel it strange or impertinent when they are addressed as having within them an essence which differs from the clod ; it is well that some should believe that man is more than a machine for making money, with an apparatus for digesting meat ; that the whole grandeur of destiny is not in cent. per cent. nor the whole duty of life in the regulation of the stomach ; it is well, we insist, that some should be zealous for the soul, and maintain, not with beggarly humility, but with regal confidence, the substance, the reality, of the *unmaterial*. They should assert its sanctity and supremacy ; and, with whatever grandeur they can assert them, they will always fall below the elevation of their theme. The body has nothing with which the soul has not concern as a sov-

ereign ; but the soul has an economy of its own with which the body can only intermeddle as a servant. The ministers of the invisible are not to be rated as idle or as subordinate. In acting *in* the higher nature and *for* it, they are working also for the lower nature ; they refresh it and they enrich it. The man who prays is not useless, even for the labors of the world, though he be but a hermit in the wilderness. The man who preaches with any soul does not speak in vain, though his words may seem to fall upon the wind. Temples have even an earthly value as well as cotton mills. Statues were once more a power than statutes ; and the spirit which once went into marble is still in other media which have more influence than laws. Song was before railroads, and will outlast them ; story is as old as time ; poetry is as natural as man ; and a thought, an emotion, is a *fact* not less real than a paper mill or a pike staff. Some may not believe this ; but so it is. There are those who appear to esteem nothing a fact which does not relate to what they can see or feel, or taste or smell, and nothing as *practical* which does not relate to such a fact. Sublime ideas, great sentiments, one of this class never thinks of as in the sphere of *realities*, nor ever as adding to the sum of actual existence. The *power*, therefore, which so acts upon the soul as to fill it with these ideas and sentiments, he does not consider as practical or as productive. If it were possible for you to put into the brain of this kind of man a thought which would have gladdened Pascal or into his bosom a feeling which would have enraptured Milton, he still would give you credit for nothing that was to much advantage. But tell him that

there is a lake in the centre of Africa, and in that lake there is a fish ; that this fish has a blue tail, a yellow fin on one side, and a green fin on the other ; that it has peach-colored eyes and slate-colored gills ; that its length is an inch and ten places of a decimal, — “ Ay,” he would say, “ there is *instruction* ; there is a fact. I go for facts, for what a man can understand ; in short, for what is *practical*.” Now, if this statement were a truth, it has no observable connection with this man’s existence ; it is a truth which seems remoter than the farthest stars from his daily life ; there is no conceivable way in which he can use it to make him richer or poorer, better or worse ; but the consciousness which a great thought or a noble emotion puts into his soul is a possession of which he cannot be deprived ; it is a fact as real as his existence, as grand as his immortal faculties. “ What,” says De Quincey, “ do you learn from *Paradise Lost* ? Nothing at all. What do you learn from a cookery book ? Something new, something you did not know before, in every paragraph. But would you therefore put the wretched cookery book on a higher level of estimation than the divine poem ? What you owe to Milton is, not any knowledge, of which a million separate items are still but a million of advancing steps on the same earthly level ; what you owe is *power* ; that is, exercise and expansion to your own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upward — a step ascending, as upon a Jacob’s ladder, from earth to mysterious altitude above the earth. *All* the steps of knowledge, from the first to the last, carry you farther on the same plane, but could

never raise you one foot above your ancient level of earth ; whereas the very *first* step in power is a flight, is an ascending, into another element, where earth is forgotten."

*Sight*, after all, is only a faculty of guidance. Motion, work, or play demands the exercise of power ; and according to the power and the exercise of it will be achievement or enjoyment. We have the fruits of this active power, under the guidance of this seeing faculty, in many varieties of composition by De Quincey ; and in them all, not the perspicacity alone of a distinct *seer*, but the energy of a most *vital* thinker. As we consider *thinking* the central and pervading function of De Quincey's mind, we know of no other quality by which we can so definitely characterize his *thinking* as by that of *vitality*.

*Thinking*, we have said, we consider the central and pervading function of De Quincey's mind. The sense to which we here restrict *thinking* we need not explain. Thinking, then, is the constant, continuous, natural action of De Quincey's inward life, almost as much so as breathing is of his bodily life. De Quincey has written no work of systematic thought ; and yet in the writings which he has thrown out, fugitive and fragmentary as they are, he has given evidence that there is no system of thought which he has not mastered. Often on a topic seemingly the most remote from abstract philosophy, through a mere allusion or a hint, chasms are opened to you in the depths of speculation ; or you are wafted away into the realm of the ideal, where intellect shapes its theories without impediment amidst the freedom of the infinite. Often, in connec-



tion with some incident, some flash of memory, or some pang of feeling, you are drawn into the labyrinths of "*consciousness*," and exploring in winding ways for the sources of human knowledge; you are engaged in the obscure inquiries of ontology, and excited to an impassioned interest in the mysteries of being. In a passage of his individual experience; in stating some æsthetic law; in developing a rule of art; in giving the reasons for some opinion on Wordsworth; in accounting for the influence of Coleridge and in defining it; in analyzing such minds as those of Shelley, Kant, or Goethe; in examining their relations to letters and humanity, — De Quincey evinces, not the profoundness and subtilty alone of his metaphysical thinking, but quite as much its flexibility and the vastness of its range. Not less a master is he in ethical, political thinking; indeed, in all the thinking which enters into the various regulative and economic sciences of life. But it is not to thinking in these formal methods we especially refer; we refer to that thinking which permeates the whole of De Quincey's writing. He does not, for special occasions, put his mind into reflective attitudes, as the ritualist at times gives his attention to religion, but rather, like the true saint, whose soul is always in that state of communion with holiness which is ready for prayer, his intellect is in that sustained condition of meditation which is ready for thought. The moment of expression has nothing to do but to shape it; the material is ever abundant to exuberance; not a line but is alive with the action of his cogitating brain. In all his communications with his readers he uses no sign which does not stand

for *mind* ; and, if his readers miss the mind, the fault is not in the sign, but in them. In the simplest things he gives character by thought to his phraseology ; in the manner in which *he* conceives of them he writes ; and thus his most familiar words become instinct with original, because with primitive, meaning. All that he writes is tested before he puts it into speech ; and the stamp of a genuine value is then upon it. All that he offers to the intelligence of others is first verified in his own ; and we feel by the spirit which throbs in it that he has put it honestly through his individual consciousness. Thus it is that the writings of De Quincey are so imbued with thinking ; thus it is that they are so constantly heaving to the surface jewels of truth which come up from the ocean depths of contemplation ; thus it is that they are so quickening to our faculties. Refine as De Quincey may, digress as he may, be as parenthetical as he chooses, he never becomes tedious ; for every word has force, every word is fuel on the flame of thought, and increases its heat and brightens its light. Thus it is that De Quincey's compositions have such mental wealth. Not like shallow cisterns are they in a dry atmosphere, which a casual shower merely moistens and which the next wind leaves dry again ; but like those seas and lakes which Nature from her everlasting springs replenishes, and that send up shapes of glory to the sun from out their fulness. Here are floods of soul in which the thinking spirit can bathe and refresh itself and come out braced and vigorous for exertion. These rich essays are the product of incessant meditation ; and cold and passive must the faculties be which their inspira-

tion cannot animate, which their suggestiveness cannot incite.

We shall offer some further observations to account for this *vitality* in De Quincey's thinking. We ascribe it first to the *emotional* temperament of his nature. He can never separate thinking from *life*. He cannot set one side of his brain going like a "calculating machine," then set the other side to watch it, and thus be, as some mathematical Malaprop would phrase it, "two gentlemen at once." In whatever he does the whole man is concerned; all his faculties work together, and, not least, those which are sensitive. He goes into his speculation as much with his heart as with his head; and there is no subject which does not awaken his emotions when it interests his intellect. In his powerful criticism on the unity of Homer and the Iliad, nothing can be more affecting than his remarks on the character of Achilles; and an eloquence which profoundly moves the feelings is subservient to a strictness of argument which convinces the judgment. In a paper, the object of which is to prove that the Essenes were the disciples of Christ in Judea, the sensibility which he has in himself, and which he excites in his readers, for the sufferings and dangers of the early Christians, gives no less force than interest to his position; it impregnates the reasoning with sympathy, and, by the pathos of sentiment, increases the cogency of thought. Impulse does not with De Quincey disturb logic; on the contrary, impulse doubly aids his logic; for while it enlivens it convinces. In this very essay, for instance, on The Essenes, De Quincey regards the demolition of Josephus as neces-

sary to his purpose ; and accordingly he so completes his work that no divisible atom of credibility in Josephus remains to impede his way. In the course of doing it, his intellect is so cool that no mistake is left possible, and yet his passion is so much on fire that it utterly consumes its object. The first degree of baseness which he ascribes to Josephus seems in itself superlative ; it seems enough for everlasting infamy ; and there we fancy we must stop. But not so. This step made firm, another yet below it is as strongly fixed, another, still another, and another, until we are so far downward in the pit of rascality that no ray of honor pierces the compactness of its gloom, and, blinded and dizzy, we hasten back again to light. But to be moved in this manner is exceptional with De Quincey ; and in the present case, too, his indignation is aroused against miscreancy by his love of true manhood, and his fierce exposure of guilt is incident to an aim beyond it. Habitually, the emotions which *vitalize* De Quincey's thinking are sensibility to beauty, an ardor of desire after all that is transcendent in nature, science, art, in genius, in learning ; an innate spirit of humanity, a love of abstract studies, and a love of abstract truth ; scholastic zeal with poetic fervor, an intent earnestness in every inquiry related to the mysteries of man, his experience and his destiny. And hence, in the second place, we ascribe the vitality of De Quincey's thinking to his imagination. This is interpenetrative, impassioned, creative. It is a searcher of spirits ; it is a discerner of the subtle essences of things ; it enters into the hidden places of philosophy, of literature, and of civilization ; and, like a disimbodied soul, it takes note

of the innermost workings, and brings out the record of them for the study of the world. The imaginative insight which can livingly scrutinize the genius of an individual and lay bare the fountains of its power belongs only to the rarest minds ; and so, if De Quincey had done nothing in literature but explored, as he has done, all the latent deeps of Wordsworth's poetry, he would have shown how largely the faculty was his to which the concealments of great souls are open. But how sublime is that introspective imagination, that might of spiritual conception, to which the dim ideas of primitive philosophies and the social phenomena of buried empires seem as transparent as household thoughts, as palpable as immediate objects ! Old Greece is thus as familiar to him as yesterday's newspaper ; and he finds no more trouble in exposing the fallacies of Plato's Republic than he would in correcting the errors of a proofsheets. Rome is as plainly before him as Greece ; before his grand historic imagination the clouds of centuries roll away as the mists of morning sweep up the mountains at the rising sun and leave their summits blazing in the golden light. Rome's imperial spaces are clear to his view : again her provinces are filled, her legions cover the world, and the crash of thrones is heard in the shock of her armies ; her cities are crowded ; the frenzy of power and of passion is in her throngs ; a cry from every land curses her in low tones, and at the same time begs for quarter in loud ones ; her triumphs celebrate in festal processions the miseries of nations ; her palaces are solid with dark stability, and crown her hills with lurid splendor ; races are in the circus ; fights are in the



amphitheatre ; yells of cannibal delight shriek from audiences made rapturous by sports of blood, agony, and fear. Rome, in fact, is at the summit of her dominion and in the depths of her luxury ; her titanic institutions are in full action, and her gigantic appetites are sick with the surfeit of indulgence. Through De Quincey's imagination we look upon the vision and the terror of it, in his volume on the Cæsars and his Essay on the Philosophy of Roman History ; through his imagination we see that it is a vision of death, that inarticulate prophecies of lamentation are in its acclamations, spectres sit around its banquets ; ruin is written with the invisible hand of Providence over all its portals, and the grim genius of destruction sits and laughs upon its strongest places. In a few pages we apprehend more distinctly the causes of Rome's extinction than in all the volumes of Gibbon, eloquent and philosophic as they are. Like elemental fire, this imagination of De Quincey's glows through every subject into which it enters, quickens it within, illumines it outside, and covers it with gorgeousness and beauty. With an *actualizing* energy it feels what is in the heart of an age and how the age lives in those who belong to it. Not merely as a philosophic abstraction does De Quincey know the spirit of an age, but also as it becomes incorporate in living personalities. Give him the elements of the era, — that is, its moral, spiritual, and social agencies, — then he gives you the consciousness into which they are formed in the individual.

Take, as example, his contrast between the feelings of a Christian woman and a vestal virgin, in his article on Pope, and you will have the whole import of

this idea in a passage which for imagination has nothing grander in poetry, and which for splendor of language has nothing loftier in eloquence. And, lastly, we ascribe the *vitality* of De Quincey's thinking to his *humor*. Grasping and tenacious as is his intellect; stern as are many of the problems which engage his thoughts; passionately as he questions spirit and mystery for their secrets, as passionately as Jacob in the wilderness wrestled with the angel for his blessing; isolated as he often is in the loneliness of feelings which cannot be shared, and the solitary pathos of whose utterance is as the song of an exile in a strange tongue in a strange land, understood not in its language, but *felt* in the sadness of its melody, — he has an exhilaration in *thinking* which keeps fresh the inward cheerfulness of his mind and sustains the vigor of its faculties. Thinking is to him a gladness, a joy in the life of his intellect; and, be the subject ever so sombre or perplexing, the intensity of mental action put into it amounts at all times almost to ecstasy. This hilarity of thought is ever breaking from logic into laughter. The laughter is not often boisterous; generally it is quiet; but, however quiet, there is mirth of the soul in it, a mirth of mastery, a mirth not contemptuous, not boastful, yet exultant, elastic in the pleasure of knowledge and of strength. The humor of De Quincey is never assumed or forced; it is never introduced for a purpose, not even for what might seem the legitimate purpose of mitigating the severity of speculation; it is not sought for; but it comes, and it comes with all the individuality of the writer's nature. It comes, *not* with observation, and often

when it is least expected ; so that, when we have our pocket handkerchiefs ready for tears which we are prepared to shed, quizzical imps are grinning at us through mists of oddity, and turn our long faces into fun. A very strange thing is this humor of De Quincey's ; sometimes puzzling, sometimes extravagant, sometimes impressive, and always original ; in one word, gay, frolicsome, and boylike, it capers into all sorts of pranks, calls into play schoolday fun and college raillery ; delights in jests, mocks at gravity, and pulls the beards of dignitaries. It is at home in the Roman forum, and banters Cicero ; meets Lucullus at dinner and criticizes his bill of fare ; takes liberties with the Cæsars and cracks jokes upon the patriots. As much at home is this humor of perennial youth in the highways and byways of Greece and with every leading character of Athens ; it is upon terms of " will you come and take pot luck with me " familiarity. Its quizzes at the moderns are endless ; and for sly, insinuated comicality, for dry ridicule with a serious look, it is the very Tartuffe-ism of drollery. In moods more serious it can be cutting and derisive ; and in the case of a noted character, as in that of Josephus, it has at command a vocabulary of indignation which is exceedingly vernacular. In what we may call the "*irony of the terrible*," nothing since the satire of Swift approaches the article of De Quincey on Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts. And thus we have this rare and varied humor, now in the grave robe of the critic, laughing at the learned ; then in the scarlet one of the satirist, giving the vicious to odium ; last in motley, suggesting wisdom in levity, and, like the

spirits that Shakspeare so clad, sharpening at one time the keenness of wit, with the sagacity of Touchstone ; and at another, with the bitter tenderness of Lear's "poor fool," deepening the force of pathos. By this humor in motley, how felicitously does De Quincey expose an absurdity and infuse the most exquisite drollery into the illustration by which he exposes it ! In his essay, for example, on Secret Societies, he laughs at the idea of a conspiracy to overthrow the Christian religion, one motive for which was to have the utmost freedom in licentious indulgence. But the very illustration which turns this idea into ridicule is itself a burlesque on parade of learning. Thus he does it in a story from the life of Pyrrhus, the Epirote : "One day a friend requested to know what ulterior purpose the king might mask under his expedition to Sicily. 'Why, after *that* is finished,' replied the king, 'I mean to administer a little correction (very much wanted) to certain parts of Italy, and particularly to that nest of rascals in Latium.' 'And then,' said the friend. 'And then,' said Pyrrhus, 'next we go to Macedon ; and after that job's jobbed, next, of course, for Greece.' 'Which done,' said the friend. 'Which done,' interrupted the king, 'as done it shall be, then we're off to tickle the Egyptians.' 'Whom having tickled,' pursued the friend, 'whither next ?' 'Why, really, man, it's hard to say ; you give one no time to breathe ; but we'll consider the case in Persia ; and, until we've settled it, we can crown ourselves with roses and pass the time pleasantly enough over the best wine to be found in Ecbatana.' 'That's a very just idea,' replied the friend ; 'but, with submission, it strikes me that

we might do *that* just now, and at the beginning of all these tedious wars, instead of waiting for the end.' 'Bless me,' said Pyrrhus, 'if I ever thought of *that* before. Why, man, you're a conjurer; you've discovered a mine of happiness. So, here boy, bring us roses and plenty of Cretan wine.' Surely, on the same principle, these French encyclopedists and Bavarian illuminati did not need to postpone any jubilees of licentiousness which they promised themselves to so very indefinite a period as their oration over the ruins of Christianity."

In no composition of De Quincey's more than in this paper does he pour forth those deeply mystic and musical strains of eloquence which entitle him to rank with the greatest poets of thought; and in no composition of his more than in this does he indulge in quaint eccentricities of humor. Much has been written on the secrecy of Free Masonry; but here is De Quincey's summary of it all: "When the novice is introduced into the conclave of Free Masons the grand master looks very fierce at him, and draws, which makes the novice look very melancholy, as he is not aware of having at any time, as yet, been guilty of any profaneness, and fancies, therefore, that somebody must have been slandering him. Then the grand master or his deputy cites him to the bar, saying, 'What's *that* you have in your pocket?' To which the novice replies, 'A guinea.' 'Any thing more?' 'Another guinea.' 'Then,' replies the official person in a voice of thunder, '*fork out!*' Of course, to a man coming sword in hand, few people refuse to do *that*. This forms the first half of the mystery; the second half, which is by



much the more interesting, consists entirely of brandy. In fact, this latter mystery forms the reason or the final cause for the elder mystery of the ‘*forking out.*’ ”

After all, his more serious tone is his most natural and affecting. If at home in the humorous and comical, he is yet more at home in the tragical and profound. The solemn and religious awe with which he invests some great thought or beautiful conception is one of the principal charms of his writings. As a specimen of this, take the following, from the *Suspiria* : —

“God smote Savanna la Mar, and in one night, by earthquake, removed her, with all her towers standing and population sleeping, from the steadfast foundations of the shore to the coral floors of ocean. And God said, ‘Pompeii did I bury and conceal from men through seventeen centuries : this city I will bury, but not conceal. She shall be a monument to men of my mysterious anger, set in azure light through generations to come ; for I will enshrine her in a crystal dome of my tropic seas.’ This city, therefore, like a mighty galleon with all her apparel mounted, streamers flying, and tackling perfect, seems floating along the noiseless depths of ocean ; and oftentimes in glassy calms, through the translucid atmosphere of water that now stretches like an air-woven awning above the silent encampment, mariners from every clime look down into her courts and terraces, count her gates, and number the spires of her churches. She is one ample cemetery, and *has* been for many a year ; but, in the mighty calms that brood for weeks over tropic latitudes, she fascinates the eye with a *fata morgana* revelation, as of human life

still subsisting in submarine asylums sacred from the storms that torment our upper air.

“Thither, lured by the loveliness of cerulean depths, by the peace of human dwellings privileged from molestation, by the gleam of marble altars sleeping in everlasting sanctity, oftentimes in dreams did I and the dark interpreter cleave the watery veil that divided us from her streets. We looked into the belfries, where the pendulous bells were waiting in vain for the summons which should awaken their marriage peals; together we touched the mighty organ keys, that sang no *jubilates* for the ear of heaven, that sang no requiems for the ear of human sorrow; together we searched the silent nurseries, where the children were all asleep, and *had* been asleep through five generations. ‘They are waiting for the heavenly dawn,’ whispered the interpreter to himself; ‘and, when *that* comes, the bells and the organs will utter a *jubilate* repeated by the echoes of paradise.’ Then, turning to me, he said, ‘This is sad; this is piteous; but less would not have sufficed for the purpose of God. Look here: put into a Roman clepsydra one hundred drops of water; let these run out as the sands in an hourglass, every drop measuring the hundredth part of a second, so that each shall represent but the three hundred and sixty thousandth part of an hour. Now, count the drops as they race along; and, when the fiftieth of the hundred is passing, behold! forty-nine are not, because already they have perished; and fifty are not, because they are yet to come. You see, therefore, how narrow, how incalculably narrow, is the true and actual present. Of that time which we call the present, hardly a

hundredth part but belongs either to a past which has fled or to a future which is still on the wing. It has perished, or it is not born; it was, or it is not. Yet even this approximation to the truth is *infinitely* false; for again subdivide that solitary drop, which only was found to represent the present, into a lower series of similar fractions, and the actual present which you arrest measures now but the thirty-sixth millionth of an hour; and so by infinite declensions the true and very present, in which only we live and enjoy, will vanish into a mote of a mote, distinguishable only by a heavenly vision. Therefore the present, which only man possesses, offers less capacity for his footing than the slenderest film that ever spider twisted from her womb; therefore, also, even this incalculable shadow from the narrowest pencil of moonlight is more transitory than geometry can measure or thought of angel can overtake. The time which *is* contracts into a mathematic point; and even that point perishes a thousand times before we can utter its birth. All is finite in the present; and even that finite is infinite in its velocity of flight towards death. But in God there is nothing finite; but in God there is nothing transitory; but in God there *can* be nothing that tends to death. Therefore it follows, that for God there can be no present. The future is the present of God; and to the future it is that he sacrifices the human present. Therefore it is that he works by earthquake; therefore it is that he works by grief. O, deep is the ploughing of earthquake! O, deep,' (and his voice swelled like a *sanc-tus* rising from the choir of a cathedral,) — 'O, deep is the ploughing of grief! But oftentimes less would

not suffice for the agriculture of God. Upon a night of earthquake he builds a thousand years of pleasant habitations for man ; upon the sorrow of an infant he raises oftentimes from human intellects glorious vintages that could not else have been. Less than these fierce ploughshares would not have stirred the stubborn soil. The one is needed for earth, our planet — for earth itself, as the dwelling-place of man ; but the other is needed yet oftener for God's mightiest instrument ; yes,' (and he looked solemnly at myself,) 'is needed for the mysterious children of the earth.' "

In a very distinctive sense we may refer to De Quincey as a *reader*. We feel in every page that he has read with all his genius. He has read with his feeling for the ludicrous ; and therefore the folly and the conceit of writers he turns to account, as well as their wisdom and their talents. In the most out-of-the-way places of learning he discovers snug spots for jesting and repose, and the heaviest rubbish of the schools he can kindle into a blaze of wit. Not less has he read with pathos and with moral sensibility. We find proof of this in the affecting and solemn allusions with which his writings abound to whatever in ancient or modern literature deals with the sad or deep things of humanity ; but we feel it most when he is concerned with an individual character ; as, for instance, with Joan of Arc. With what force and tenderness of soul De Quincey *read*, we have evidence in this essay, by the force and tenderness with which he has applied the results of his reading. The sagacity of sympathy is grandly illustrated, and the subtilty of an inquiring spirit finely exercised, in this exposition

of sublime virtue. That most tragic story, as De Quincey clears it from falsehood and exaggeration, comes with a divine simplicity to the heart; and the heroine, as he reads her life for us, as he describes her death, we see in all her truth, in the grace of her innocence and youth, in the strength of her courage and her patriotism, in the dignity of her meekness, in the majesty of her martyrdom; and we love, pity, and revere the persecuted maiden, but we most exult in the triumphant saint. He has read with vital thought; he has thought *into* books and he has thought *through* them; and such books as had room enough for the motion of his mind he has in every part measured and examined. He has, accordingly, estimated the dimensions of great writers which none before him seem to have completely or accurately surveyed; and in corners of even familiar authors he comes upon neglected import, suggestive to him of profound ideas. How false, after his explanation, seems the trite notion that Herodotus is a simple story teller! To the reading of De Quincey he is a mighty spirit, of genius vast and complicate; not a mere narrator of myths, journeyings, and traditions, but an imbodiment of all the knowledge and of the highest inspiration of his age — the Homer of Greek prose. This is to read with the re-creating force of synthetic thought; but, reading with the sharp insight of analytic thought also, De Quincey elicits results equally original; and, for illustration, we refer to some recondite ideas which his studies of Josephus have unfolded. But especially has De Quincey read with his imagination; and thence it is that he has read poetry with such an enlightened spirit, with such



an understanding heart. Poetry, above all, cannot be read in the letter; for the letter, of itself, will not yield the life in which poetry consists. *That* is reached only by one who has the experience of it in himself, who is moved by its power, and who has inward sight for the vision of its glory. To whom but such a one can Shakspeare, at least, be revealed? It is not cold perception which can enter into communion with the dark and mystical soul of Hamlet; that can fathom the passions of doubt, the griefs of thought, the solitude of spirit that torture, waste, and kill him. It is not cold perception which can enter into the burning heart of Othello and conceive the intensity of that love which first stole into it with soft enchantment and then tore it in the convulsion of fierce despair. It is not cold perception which can explore the caverns of Macbeth's mind and trace in them the dim shapes of fate. It is not cold perception which can look into the guilty bosom of his wife and behold "that foul and perilous stuff which weighs upon the heart" and crushes out its life. It is not cold perception which can open to you the wily intellect of Richard or give you the sense of his villanies and his courage. It is not cold perception which can comprehend the desolateness of Lear: not to *that*, as he sits upon the ground, can the bereaved old man "tell strange stories of the deaths of kings" or still stranger stories of their daughters. It is not cold perception which takes cognizance of Titania, Puck, Ariel, Caliban, Miranda, Prospero. No; imagination it is to which these reveal themselves; it is by that faculty that words upon the printed page quicken into life, brighten into splendor, or

gather into shadows of terror or of power. As the letter of a book cannot give the spirit of these things, the mechanism of a theatre cannot give their scenery. It is imagination which must also do this ; and baize, and canvas, and paint, and gaslight rather hinder than help it. It is imagination with the volume in the closet which can give to Hamlet his true kingdom of the ideal Denmark ; which can place the dusky Moor impressively in the halls of his olden castle amidst the visions of his jealousy ; which can dwell with Macbeth behind his frowning battlements or follow him to midnight heaths — see the blaze of weird fires on the faces of unearthly hags and against the black vault of the sepulchral sky ; which can set Richard before us amidst all that is genuinely terrible, whether we see him in the secret retreats of meditation, in the pomp of open council, in the horrors of his dreams, or in bloody struggle in the crush of armies on the field of death ; which can build adequately over Lear the murky and cheerless heavens, and spread beneath him the homeless wild, and listen to the tempest as it beats upon him with its “ pitiless storm ; ” which again can turn from this and it is gone. Then open the book elsewhere, and in a moment it can lighten up the azure dome with stars, cover the ground with flowers, fill the air with summer, throng glen and grove with merry elves and charmed men, make glad the night with fairy revels, steep it in the mystery of beauty, and wrap fancy in the dream which Shakspeare dreamed. Thus we conceive imagination reads ; and, when it has such scope as the reading De Quincey gives, grand indeed must be the life in which it lives, glorious beyond ex-

pression the universe of ideas and emotions in which it revels. We have here but indicated the *spirit* in which De Quincey *reads* rather than the extent and variety of his scholarship. We have no adequate authority to criticize his erudition ; but the living spirit with which he has studied, those of most moderate culture can appreciate and enjoy. To go through books is not to *read* them. Men may masticate thousands of volumes, but not convert them into nourishment : after devouring hecatombs of folios, they may have minds as lanky as before ; or if, with acquisitive memory, their minds increase in bulk, the bulk is that of obesity, and not of muscle. But men may read wisely and read well, yet not to the issue to which De Quincey has read. It would be possible, no doubt, to equal De Quincey in the number and worth of the books he has studied ; but to read as De Quincey has read would require as much genius as to write as De Quincey has written.

And this brings us to the consideration of De Quincey as a *writer* ; but is it not as a *writer* we have been considering him through our long paper ? True, inasmuch as it is only through his writing that we know him. We have ventured, however, to conceive ourselves to be, relatively to our examination, as *behind* his works, and from *that* point of vision to look through them. We now change our position, and for a short time direct our thoughts to that function of expression whereby we have knowledge of De Quincey's mind and are put into communion with it. We say, then, in the first place, that De Quincey gives us his *meaning*. To do this being the purpose of the most ordi-

nary utterance, it may seem an impertinence to mention it as a distinction of good writing ; yet it is no impertinence so to mark it ; for, although to give one's meaning be the first condition of any writing, it is only in the best that we find it in perfection. In composition, as in every art, he alone performs well its simple functions who has also mastered its difficulties. Curran said of an advocate who dealt largely in sentimental and pathetic bombast, " It will never do for a man to turn painter merely on the strength of having a pot of colors by him, unless he knows how to lay them on." To the unskilled in composition, the vocabulary is of as little use as the pot of colors is to the unskilled in painting ; and as the dauber could no more paint the chair in Raphael's picture than he could the heavenly grace of the Madonna's countenance, the scribbler could no more relate an anecdote, or apply it as De Quincey does, than he could write the most brilliant of his essays. The sufficiency of thoroughly disciplined power is his in every thing, in the common as in the rare : obvious thought is not darkened by obscurity of expression ; and profound thought is made as clear as language can make it. Ideas are presented distinctly, each in its own singleness, each also in its relations ; and, without any show of system, the author communicates them to our minds with the order and gradation which they have in his mind ; and while thus imparting his meaning, unmistakably and in its fulness, in the mere process of giving it he excites the faculties of the reader ; he enlivens them ; he gives them pleasure ; and thus there is inducement to peruse his writings, not for his meaning alone, but also for the

interest and the enjoyment which are experienced in obtaining it. Writers whose matter is of signal value sometimes fail in all these requisites. Their meaning is doubtful by clumsiness of expression or difficult by complexity of method; and thus it is either lost or it is misunderstood. The few who have knowledge of its value, who are aware that success will give ample compensation for fatigue, may persevere and conquer; but numbers will be repelled at the outset, and many will not even begin the search. If they should have nothing in manner which obscures meaning, they often have an inertness that deadens it; the latent force that slumbers in it is not awakened, and it fails to arouse the intellects with which it is brought into contact. Every loss to the subject in such case is a loss to souls—a loss to them of the truth which they might have learned and of the energy to which they might have been aroused. De Quincey is unlike such authors in that he gives his meaning; he is like them in that his meaning is worth giving. We need not here enter into particulars, since all we have written includes this position and aims to unfold our consciousness of it; and now, so near the end of our article, knowing the depth of this consciousness, we feel how inadequate has been our exposition. When we look upon the seventeen volumes of De Quincey which are before us while we write; when we think on the wealth of power and of life, of wisdom, truth, and beauty which is in them; when we think on the wonderful experience which they contain—of the humor, always on the margin of immensity, brilliant, indeed, on one side, but on the other losing its brightness in the shadows of the infinite; of the sub-



lime ideas which meditation, that broods upon eternity, generates — ideas which fill the condition of man with awful fears as well as mighty hopes, but that glorify while they sadden it ; of inarticulate musings, that are liturgies of worship in the inner sanctuary of the spirit, that with every opening day are the matins of a new creation, and with every falling night are the vespers of returning darkness — the daily sacrament of mystery ; when we recall the amount of interest and delight which we owe to them, the number of profound and pleasurable hours with which they have enriched us, the sense of inward dignity with which they have inspired us in melancholy that is better than joy, and in exercise of thought more stimulating than a feast, — when we think of all this, and contrast it with our effort to make our impressions known, we despond over the result, and are almost more inclined to burn our essay than to print it. And yet the feelings which lead to this confession say more, we think, for that living power of meaning with which De Quincey's writings are imbued than any specification of detail, though done with the utmost accuracy of philosophical analysis. Such feelings show the spirituality of their import and the spirituality of their influence. Quivering with emotion as in many parts they are, there is nothing in them of maudlin sentiment ; alive with all charitable pity and wisehearted benevolence, there is no mannerism in them of a narrow purpose and no heat of an ill-tempered zeal. Much learning is in them ; but they are not mad, neither are they pedantic or abstruse, but infused with a soul of liberal humanity, which is gracious to the living while it venerates the dead. They

court not the *esoteric* approbation of a fastidious coterie, and they are as far from craving after vulgar popularity; but in the whole breadth of the intellectual nature they meet in every direction the thoughtful mind; in all varieties of emotion they respond to the impassioned heart; they appeal to our noble instincts; they address our higher faculties; and so they elevate us, by drawing us up from the mean regions of sense into the free spaces of grand ideas, of unworldly excitements, of affecting and beautiful imaginings. It is no wonder, therefore, that the meaning of De Quincey should go forth into a glorious style, if, for the sake of convenience, we distinguish style as separate from meaning. Even as only thus considered it is extraordinary, and has in itself the evidence of genius. It comes out of a deep spirit and is instinct with the force of life. It is easy; it consists, so far as words are concerned, of fine, natural, impressive mother English; and the mind, while taking in its purport, imbibes a warmth which homeborn speech, enlivened with thought, always imparts. The expression does, indeed, take the dimensions or the impulse of the idea or the sentiment, but the tongue is never strange; the import may be novel, but the voice is always native. Though De Quincey so often deals with topics away from English civilization and literature, he has a singular facility of fusing his most learned speculations into the idiom of English thinking, even into the idiom of its drollery and its slang. His style is frequently involved, and yet it is never intricate; for, however phrase may roll within phrase, the thread of the meaning never becomes knotty or entangled. So, too, his style is fluent;

not with the weakness and looseness of shallow water, but with the condensed brilliancy of the stream, with the grand sweep of the torrent, or with the undulations of the sea. It is gentle without losing manliness; it is sweet without being dainty; it is luminous, but it does not glare; and, without being florid, it is rich with imagery. The style of De Quincey is admirably flexible; it modulates with the modulations of his mind; and its transitions are as smooth as the changes of a tune. It is no less flexible in its adaptation to every variety in the matter: in philosophy it is subtle; in argument close; in description vivid; in emotion it answers as truly to the feeling as respiration to the beatings of the heart; in all it is progressive, and advances with increase of energy as the subject advances with increase of interest. It is most *individually* marked; it has a most decisive mannerism; it cannot be mistaken; and yet within itself, and limited by its own laws, it has such abundance of diversity that it never wearies and is never monotonous. As impassioned prose, especially, it is excellent: it is at no time deformed with the measure or the rhythm which is proper to verse, but it has a true measure and rhythm of its own: lyrical often as the finest verse, it still remains free as the simplest prose: and this is a great charm of it, that it combines the ethereal idealism of poetry with the burning actuality of eloquence. This is a rare combination; for it is hard to find the elements of poetry and of eloquence so intermingled that one does not spoil the other — that the eloquence does not turn poetry into rhetoric, or poetry change eloquence to bombast; but, in the impassioned prose

of De Quincey, the two are so happily blended that both form a unity of beauty and of power. Many analogies crowd upon the mind in thinking of De Quincey's style. If we associate it with analogies to the ear, we think of it in connection with rich harmonies of music. A passage of De Quincey often resembles a movement in a great symphony. Starting from a single note of thought, the passage, as it goes on, is gradually complicated, the harmony swells and deepens in each advance, until with cumulation and revolution of musically rolling phrases and sentences the mind as well as the ear is filled, and the effect is as when all the instruments at the close of an orchestral piece of Mozarts melt into unity the several agencies of their power. If we associate De Quincey's style with analogies to the eye, we think of it in connection with grand and solemn sights. We might think of it in connection with the appearances of the atmosphere at the close of a summer's day amidst the mountains, the forests, and the lakes of New England. There is splendor in the heavens and glory on the earth; but there is *that* with them which sobers the spirit into thought. The sun resting on the hills floods the prospect, but it is not with dry and crystal beams; it is with a light colored with all the gorgeous hues which the sky, the waters, and the woods can lend it: but Night is already drawing her dark girdle around the whole, and the soul plunges beyond it into the fathomless unknown. It is thus, too, that the style of De Quincey has ever a shadow near its brilliancy. If we should think of it in connection with analogies to both ear and eye, we would seek for them in architecture; we should find



them in the interior of a cathedral—in its spacious aisles, its stately columns, its pointed and interlacing arches, its pictured walls, its painted windows, its illuminated altars, its vested priests, its liturgies of pomp, its clouds of incense, and its tides of music. But sometimes the analogy would be more true when its aisles were empty, its altars dark; only the colored moonlight glimmering through its arches; when a solitary worshipper knelt in the depth of its gloom and its hollow spaces echoed to the sighings of his prayer. The first analogies figure to us the ritual grandeur which the style of De Quincey often assumes; the others suggest what still more properly belongs to it, and that is mystical sublimity.

Furthermore, De Quincey is a great critic of life. His own experience has been singular; and, so far as his singularity could add to knowledge, he has acutely examined and used it. But, to better purpose still, he has examined that nature which he has in common with all men. He has entered into its innermost recesses, and tested consciousness with most cunning questioning. He has not given us his discoveries with any regulated method; but we have the results of them in every thing that he has written. He has, as we have shown, gone into the deep places of thought, analyzed the qualities of action, traced the windings of passion, and scrutinized the source of motive. He has also traversed the *outward*; and with sharp inspection he has every where looked at the shows and substances of things, not perhaps always without prejudice. He has estimated the value of types and symbols, discriminated the real from the seeming, the es-



sential from the accidental, the permanent from the transient, and sought out with care the elements of a just philosophy ; and, if this philosophy is not rounded into any system of completeness, it stimulates each reader to seek out principles for himself, and for himself to make their application. We do not accept all his positions or his criticisms. In our view, his writings contain ethical and political errors ; but the errors are so few compared with the truths that we have not stopped to mark them ; and even his mistakes so often spring out of manliness, that, while we decry the mistakes, we sometimes sympathize with the earnestness of temper which commits them. But De Quincey is a great poet of life as well as a great critic. Sometimes he is a lyric poet ; and, though he uses not measure, his writing is no less a song. It is upon occasions a very sweet song, and comes in liquid melody flowing from the heart. It is dulcet with those memories which the soul will not let die and with those affections which are the religion and sanctity of human love. But most he is a tragic poet. Those deep-sounding rhythms of thought and passion that abound in his writings, and which surge so against the battlements of fact, have the forces which move them in the tragic elements of our nature ; and so, whatever faculty the genius of De Quincey exercises, it soon rises into poetic elevation and connects itself more or less with suggestions of the tragic. In whatever, too, it has most of the poetic, it has also most of the tragic. When memory leads De Quincey to his youth of trouble, of illusion, and of pain, then, as there is poetry the most impressive, so there is misery the most

profound. Memory, recalling the story of his brother, gives us a drama saturated with grief, and not the less poignant because the pathos is unconscious. So it is with fancy: it is never, in De Quincey, so varied in its images, never so luxuriant in its analogies, as when it works from the inspiration of some latent sadness. It is the same with his intellect: it delights most to deal with questions which concern the philosophy of life, the mystery of death, the sorrows which have their fountains in the sources of immortality, the fears which are interwoven with the divinest affections and the holiest sentiments. Then even reasoning has the lyric tone and thought of poetry; it moulds itself into Hamlet-like soliloquy; "the why," "the wherefore," of the struggling spirit's interrogatories are emphatic with mournful intensity; speculation strains itself almost to a cry—a cry of anguish in the inner man in his yearnings after peace. And when all working together in some profound and extraordinary combination issue in a single and unique result, we have, as in the *Household Wreck*, a tragedy as complete as any for which human suffering affords materials. The tragic power of De Quincey does not lie in the conception of a plot, in the development of character, in the detail of action or incident; for the invention and constructiveness which give power of this kind De Quincey does not possess. His consists in reaching down to those elementary interests of our deeper nature which are not limited to the condition of *fated* individuals, but which enter into the condition of every man and into his condition as man. Though universal, they are yet the most dormant in our nature, and there are few

that awaken them ; but when the voice of a living spirit stirs them they shake off their lethargy and answer to the call with most impassioned sympathy. And so it happens that the poetry and eloquence which excite such interests, when once they are apprehended, are the most affecting. There is a pathos in them deeper than tears ; and this is the pathos which the writings of De Quincey the most contain.

Because De Quincey is thus a great critic and poet of life, he is also a critic and poet of literature. With living experience, with living imagination, he has schooled his consciousness in the discipline of Nature, which must be the matter of all that is excellent and immortal in literature. In humanity itself he has sought the significance for which letters must stand, so far as letters are true signs. It was not merely by books that De Quincey was fitted to judge of what books comprise ; no, but in that which is before books and above books — the soul, with its inexhaustible capacities ; *that* which for all compositions contains the inward law, and which imposes on them their outward rules. De Quincey, therefore, has been a suggestive critic in philosophy, because he has lived much with his own consciousness ; a deep critic in history, because he has meditated much on the relations of man in community ; a glowing critic in art, in all its impassioned and imaginative manifestations, whether by the medium of language or other medium, because he has trained his sensibilities in primal communion with the universe and with man. And finally, because there was native music in his own soul, all his reading, all his erudition, all his knowledge became musical in

their use. Brought under the prevailing inspiration, even criticism grew into harmony ; and, in mere commentaries upon letters, the enthusiasm of the commentator uplifted him to the grandeur of a poet.

We cannot close our remarks on the genius of De Quincey without saying a few words on its relations to religion and the religious life.

Every pure mind, having that sort of power which we call by the name of *genius*, in all its higher action, implies the religious function. It cannot but be so, since this higher action is always struggling, reaching, after the ultimate or the perfect ; and, ever and ever, the struggle and the reaching end in *mystery*. If the primal workings of the mind could exclude all besides which enters into our idea of religion, it cannot exclude *mystery*. However unconscious, indifferent, or opposed as to what pious men deem *real* concerning the infinite, the invisible, and the eternal, no mind of strong faculties, moved by ardor for the true, or the beautiful, or the excellent, or the grand, but must feel in every profounder consciousness the *mystery* that is within it and the *mystery* that unfolds it. Take the action of a powerful mind dealing with the most naked ideas of mathematical *relation*. It loses itself in the calculus, deals with the remotest mathematics, rises to the most abstract results, in which pure thought seems to dissever reasoning from time, space, change, and matter. Yet, how perfectly soever the most transcendent problems may be resolved, however determinate may be the result, they are all within an infinitely including problem, of which *the unknown X—the mystery of Being*—meets them on every side, and defies analysis. Take



the action of a powerful mind dealing with matter in its masses. It discovers their positions, motions, order, distances, appearances, measurements, weight, and forces. It traces their paths, it notes their places, and, with an accuracy which excites delight and wonder, unfolds the universal laws of bodies and their mechanism. But the action of mind stops not with matter in the integrity of separate masses. It penetrates their interior constitution; it looks into their secret processes; it applies its geologies to the strata of the bulky mountains; it applies its chemistries to the arrangement and operations of invisible particles; and here *the unknown X* again appears, the *mystery* that evades solution. If design and purpose be admitted, it is the *mystery of creation*; if they are doubted or denied, the mystery is not less in being simply the *mystery of existence*. Take, further, the action of a powerful mind dealing with organized and vitalized forms; then upward through all the grades of vegetable and animal development, from the blade of grass to the kingly tree, from the insect's egg that slumbers in the mud to the lion that rules the forest or the eagle that overtops the cloud, there is universe above universe, there is universe within universe; and ample as the regions are which observation has traversed, harmonious as the order is which science has evolved, all that intellect discovers or understands is but a point encompassed by immensity; and *mystery* is in the point itself, as well as in the immensity that surrounds it—*the mystery of life*. Superadd to these the element of distinct consciousness, that separates itself from all and that is cognizant of itself; the subjective entity,



without which matter were as nothing, without which being would be blank, and creation objectless, and life a wilderness of blind sensation; without which no glory would be called from above the sun, no wisdom evoked from beneath the earth, and no gratitude sent up in articulated anthems from the heart of life. But this very consciousness is the crowning mystery — *the mystery of spirit*. Man is not only thus imbosomed in mystery, but has the deepest of mysteries in his capacity to apprehend mystery. Man is not only imbosomed in mystery, but is in himself the sum of all mysteries. That he is at all, involves the mystery of being; that he is so fearfully and wonderfully formed, involves the mystery of creation; that he breathes and feels, involves the mystery of life; and that he reasons and believes, involves the mystery of spirit. From this element of religion, then, no mind of energy can escape; it is impressed on it within and from without; it meets it in every direction; in the whole circle of human thought and human knowledge it is the centre and the circumference.

It would be strange if a mind so contemplative and so vigilant as De Quincey's, so large in its discourse yet so acute in its perceptions, did not feel with intensity this all-pervading and universal mystery, and, through the sense of mystery, apprehend the sacred relations of man's nature to time, to eternity, and to God — the sacred relations that constitute religion. No genius of modern literature shows so much of this feeling as does that of De Quincey. It is his by constitution, and by culture it is his also. He is much of a thinker on the metaphysics of things, and he feels

the mystery of being ; he is much of an inquirer into the constitution of things, and he feels the mystery of creation ; he is much of a muser on this full world, this vital world, throbbing in every speck of it with a quickened pulse, and he feels the mystery of life ; he is instinct and “all compact” himself with the consciousness of soul, and he feels the mystery of spirit. But, by its element of mystery, religion has relation to man only in his reason ; and this faculty, primarily, is neither emotional nor impulsive. Religion has a more living relation to man in other of his faculties. Man is a being of desire, and the subject of happiness and misery ; man is a being of affection, and the subject of love and hatred ; man is a being of conscience, and the subject of right and wrong, of the sense of rectitude and of the sense of guilt. Into all of these religion enters, and carries with it the inspiration of its own potency and infinitude. The writings of De Quincey are interfused with this emotional energy of the religious nature not less than with its intellectual searchings and aspirations ; for De Quincey, besides being a man most thoughtful, is also a man most craving in high desires, most anxious in solemn interests ; a man indeed most thoughtful, but also most sensitive, most impassioned. He is a man that, if he has not sought to *act*, has at least sought to *know*, and to *feel*, and to *aspire* in all the profounder and grander directions of humanity. He is also a man who most poignantly understands wherein he has fallen short, and who in his best attainments finds rebuke, not from the bright perfection alone, from which the holiest are infinitely remote, but by the consciousness of what he might have

accomplished and has left undone. We do not in his works read these things in obtruded humility or in volunteered deprecation, for no man more than De Quincey abhors the cant of sentiment; and, though he has made the sincerest of confessions, he has never in making them forgotten the reverence which he owed to his own soul, nor allowed others to forget it. It is in the deep spirit of the inward thought which is not *in* the word, but *under* it, which is not in the expression, but which pants *behind* it, that we feel the working of a religious mind in all that De Quincey writes; and, to a mind such as his, no merely abstruse or abstract *religionism* would be sufficient. Religion to him must be tangible in its application to his personality. The mysterious and the invisible are within it; but he in his limitations must find something by which he can make it his. That which is so hidden in abysmal obscurities that no thought can reach it, that which is so merged in immensity that no feeling can grasp it, will not meet the need of his understanding nor the yearning of his heart. It must be a revelation as well as a mystery; it must be an incarnation as well as a spirituality: and so we find that De Quincey is distinctly and avowedly a Christian. This is what we should expect from his genius and his experience. With much of the analyst, he has yet more of the poet. He seeks for the reason and the origin of things; but, more than this, he dwells upon their forms and he lives in their life. The sympathies, therefore, of his genius direct him to look in religion for the imbodiment of power and of love as they are made manifest in Christ and Christianity. The tendencies of his

experience lead him in the same direction. We presume no further on this experience, and indeed we know no further, than what his public writings tell; but in these writings we discern many wanderings amidst the shadows and the shapings of the mind, and an awaking as out of visions, that needed the guidance of a calm and steady light. We discern in them the sighings of a troubled heart, that sojourned long in the wilderness of lonely musings and that could find rest only in the shelter of secure conviction; we discern in them much that is sensitive and tender; much that is pitiful and awake to all the voices of benign humanity; much that shows of buffetings with the stormy waves of grief, temptation, and affliction; much that reveals, without intending it, the secrets of the dark prison house of suffering; much that speaks of most impassioned capacity turned into disappointment, and for whose aspiration immortality alone is the true answer; and, as we should infer, the author is a Christian. Christianity is that concrete power of religion which can act on such a man in the completeness of his being; and, after all, this man's need is that of every man, to which Christianity is the gracious ministry—the ministry of faith to doubt, the ministry of peace to trouble, the ministry of mercy to the sense of guilt, the ministry of comfort to sorrow, and of the perfect future to the imperfect present. We can see in the writings of De Quincey that the workings of his mind and the course of his experience have led him into an ardent sympathy with such a ministry, and that he could no more put the religion of his deeply-excited soul into a colorless philosophy than he could adjust

his myriadly-inspired memories to the bald conditions of a system of mnemonics. We can see in his writings that he cordially accepts Christianity ; that he accepts it as a truth, as a sentiment, as a life, and as an institution. We feel in the eloquent outpouring of his genius the longings after the true, the good, the pure, the infinite, the everlasting, which the word of Christ encourages and inspires, and an affinity with the large affections which the sublime charities of Christ's life and death illustrate.







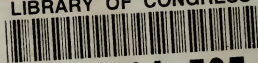








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